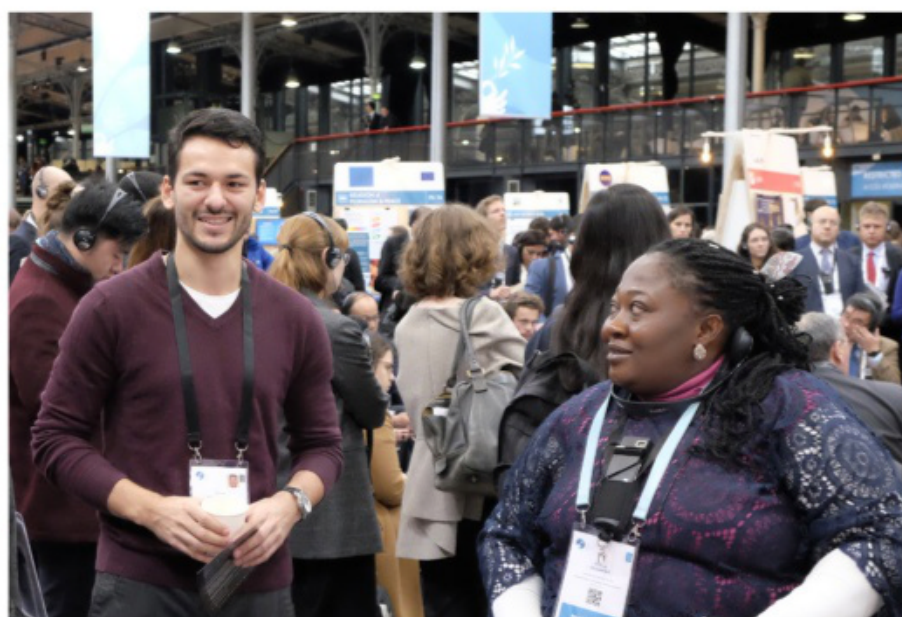




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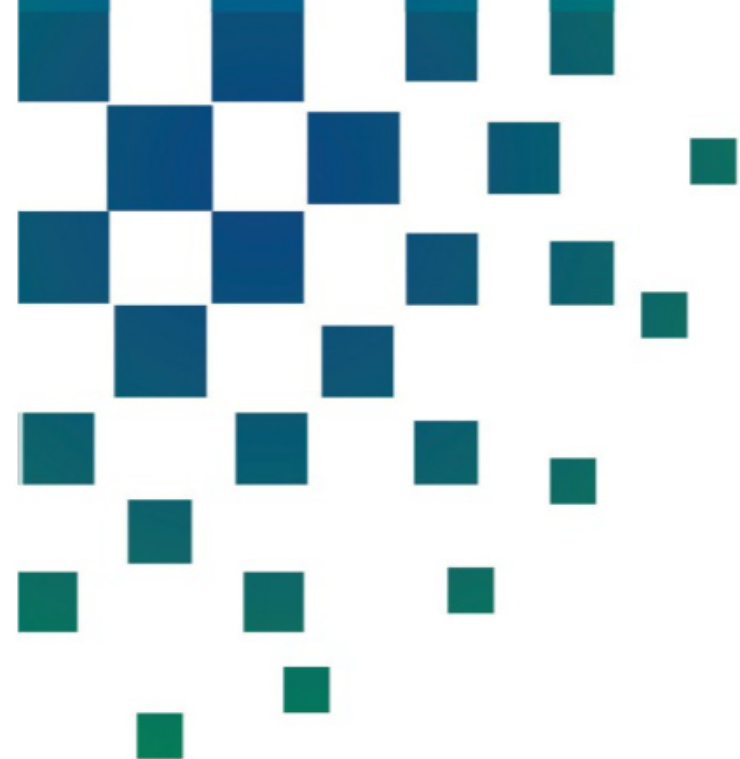
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The Mile-High Confessional Booth

Feeling guilty for the carbon burned on your last flight? The Germans have a word for that. *By Peter Kuras*

WHEN GRETA THUNBERG DEPARTED EUROPE FOR NEW YORK on Aug. 14 in a zero-emissions racing yacht, she accelerated a global discussion of the morality of flying, which has become a particular fixation of the climate change movement. According to the German nonprofit Atmosfair, a single round-trip flight from London to New York generates 986 kilograms of carbon dioxide per person.

People everywhere who care about emissions often feel a particular kind of shame when they burn an annual household's worth of carbon on a single trip. But Germans are among the few who have a word for it: *Flugscham*, or "flying shame."

The term is actually an import: It comes from *flygskam*, which was coined in Thunberg's native Sweden. Flygskam has enjoyed a tremendous career in Sweden—a popular Instagram account shames celebrities who fly too much, while train travelers flaunt their *tagskryt*, or "train pride," on Facebook and Twitter. Flugscham's reception has been more mixed, which is why the German term is ultimately more consequential than the Swedish original. Its ambivalences



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offer a more accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the current movement for climate justice.

When Fridays for Future, the movement of student protesters that Thunberg started, staged a protest at Stuttgart Airport this past July, it was met with shrugs. Flight passengers at the airport interviewed by *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* said they supported the movement, would support their own children protesting, and would rather take the train on future trips—if only there weren't so many delays. The airport, meanwhile, applauded the political commitment of the protesters and called for increased investment in reducing airline emissions. German airline lobbyists are advocating for increased investment in rail systems



and say they encourage travelers to use trains or buses for shorter trips. The Dutch airline KLM has even gone so far as to launch an advertising campaign encouraging passengers to avoid short-haul flights and instead seek other modes of transport.

The aviation industry's position might seem surprising, but it's likely in service of the sector's bottom line. Airline executives have noticed how widely climate activism has been embraced in Germany. Politicians who have dared to criticize youth activists—such as the Free Democratic Party's Christian Lindner and the Christian Democratic Union's Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer—have been roundly criticized on social media. Savvier political operators have

followed German Chancellor Angela Merkel's cue and praised the demonstrators for their political engagement while affirming their own commitment to fighting climate change. Even the reactionary Alternative for Germany, which has long rejected climate science, has considered changing its position at the request of its youth wing.

While powerful figures in politics and industry have generally encouraged the entanglement of moral judgment and consumer choice, others have been more skeptical. "Laws, not shame," wrote the far-left *Die Tageszeitung*, arguing that climate change should be addressed through governmental action rather than personal choices. *Die Zeit* has expressed fears that Flugscham may

spell the end of cosmopolitanism. *Der Tagesspiegel* has claimed that shame should be reserved for those responsible for the lamentable state of the German rail network. *Der Spiegel*, meanwhile, has pointed out that road traffic, not flying, is predominantly responsible for energy usage in the German transportation sector. In 2017, according to the German Environment Agency, of the 168 million tons of carbon dioxide produced by transportation in Germany, 162 million tons came from ground vehicles.

Though there are environmental reasons to think that the emissions produced by aircraft are especially harmful, the outsized attention paid to flying—and the increasing emotional dread associated with it—has political rather than ecological reasons. Even a slight reduction in the number of cars on the road would have a far greater impact on carbon dioxide emissions than eliminating domestic flights in Europe. But the widespread, and hugely disruptive, yellow vest protests in France serve as a clear demonstration of the dangers of government attempts to limit automobile use. In car-obsessed Germany, with its large manufacturing sector and beloved autobahn highway network, the outrage caused by any serious bid to limit automobile travel would likely

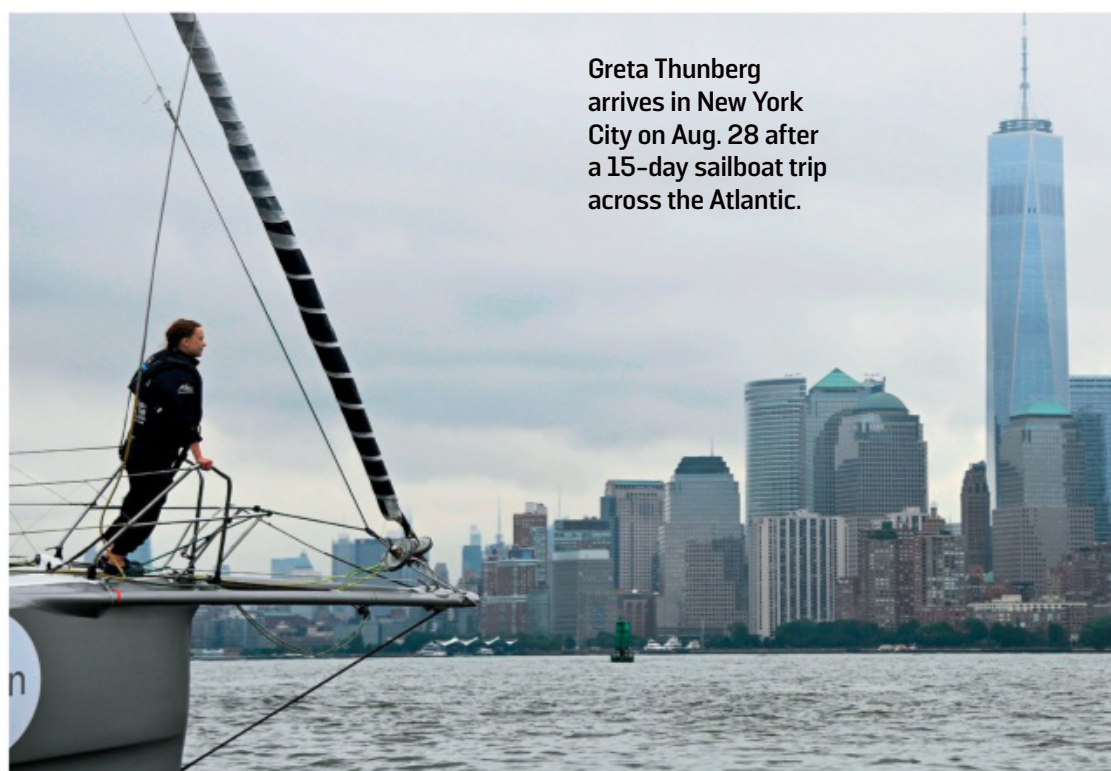
be even more profound. Frequent flyers are a less problematic target.

They're also a less powerful political actor than many of Germany's other polluters. Plenty of other sources of carbon emissions could be regulated with even less impact on ordinary Germans. According to *Der Spiegel*, the energy sector produced 299 million tons of emissions in 2018—as much as transportation and manufacturing combined.

Yet meeting emissions targets in the energy sector became nearly impossible after Germans shuttered nuclear power plants in response to the 2011 Fukushima disaster. A more careful, more gradual shift away from nuclear power might well have helped Germany meet the ambitious targets it set in the 1990s, when it was a leader in the fight against global warming. Instead, Germany has now delayed the transition away from coal power until at least 2038, and the government has failed to intercede decisively against plans to mine coal in the Hambacher Forst—an ancient forest situated above a massive reserve of brown coal.

The attention paid to reducing emissions from flights is a distraction from more important issues. Project Drawdown, an overview of approaches to stopping or reversing climate change, ranks aviation 43rd. Yet it has certainly received much more media attention of late than refrigerant management, the project's No. 1 approach to reducing carbon emissions.

The biggest problem with Flugscham, however, isn't the *Flug*—it's the *Scham*. Aviation does produce unnecessary emissions, and reducing them is certainly a laudable goal. But addressing the problem of climate change by shaming individual consumers is ultimately ineffectual. In Germany, since the word began to gain traction last year, airline ticket sales have gone up. Shame flyers too much, and they may invent the aeronautical equivalent of “rolling coal,” in which truck drivers remove environmental



Greta Thunberg arrives in New York City on Aug. 28 after a 15-day sailboat trip across the Atlantic.

The outsized attention paid to flying—and the increasing emotional dread associated with it—has political rather than ecological reasons.

protections from their rigs in order to create clouds of black smoke, giving the finger to environmentalists in the process.

Moreover, the use of shame as a political tool, as the historian Ute Frevert argues in a recent book, has a terrible résumé. It's found in war zones and totalitarian regimes, is used for racial and ethnic discrimination, and, perhaps above all else, it's associated with misogyny. Not that long ago, women who slept with the so-called wrong people were publicly raped, had their heads shaved, were placed in the pillories, or were forced to wear the scarlet letter. This history should give everyone pause when activists, no matter how well-intentioned, try to shame their politi-

cal opponents. The European far-right has already proved extremely adept at appropriating the tools of progressive organizers, and it's not hard to imagine that shaming might reappear in uglier forms in the near future.

The dedication, the passion, and the creativity of the current generation of climate activists have drawn comparisons to the antiwar movement in the 1960s, but whereas that generation of activists insisted that the personal was always political, this generation has reduced a fundamentally political question to a moral issue. Flying less might reduce personal culpability for the climate crisis, but it's pure narcissism to prioritize personal responsibility when collective action is so desperately needed. In the meantime, Flugscham is just one more opportunity to gesture at climate justice without following any real plan for achieving it. Thunberg can hold her head high knowing that she crossed the Atlantic without flying. But the two professional sailors who helped her cross the ocean? They took a commercial airliner back to Europe. ■

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Can Brexit End the Scourge of British Nativism? Dominic Cummings Thinks So.

Boris Johnson's Brexit guru sees a quick departure from the EU as the best way to neutralize Britain's far-right.
By Sahil Handa

AROUND THE WORLD, Brexit is widely seen as an exercise in populist politics. Many observers believe the 2016 referendum vote was won on the back of a toxic form of nationalism combining racism, xenophobia, and imperialist nostalgia for the heyday of the British Empire.

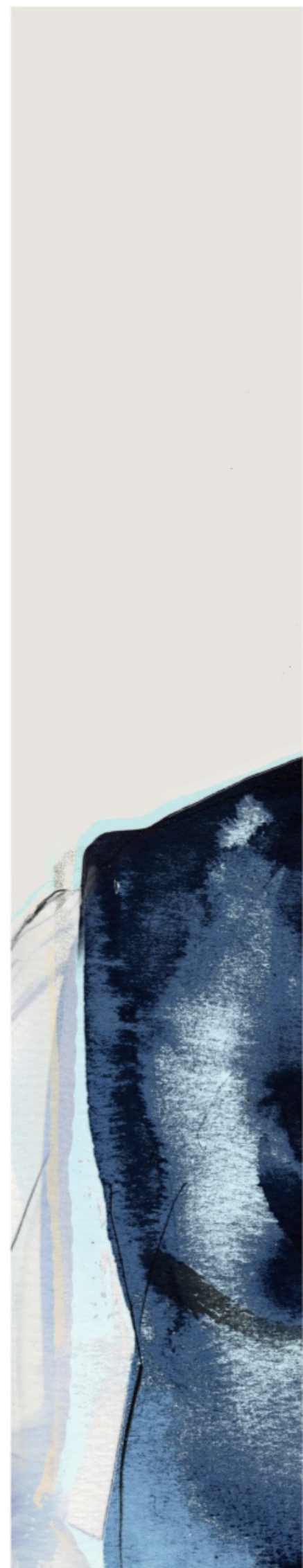
The real story is not so simple. Arguments for Brexit were made on historical, constitutional, and democratic grounds. Their proponents ranged across the political spectrum, and they appealed not only to nativist plutocrats but to a significant number of minorities and immigrants, too. But more important, the conventional wisdom ignores the possibility that some Leave advocates might have been fighting to prevent a populist takeover of Britain—by strategically adopting the same position as a band of xenophobic extremists in order to strip them of their mobilizing force.

Dominic Cummings is one such Brexit advocate—and one who continues to wield great influence over Britain's departure from the European Union. As the architect of the Leave campaign and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's newly appointed senior advisor, Cummings has been behind the scenes of Brexit at every turn. In 2016, after temporarily giving up politics to read about Greek mythology and mathematics, Cummings was placed in control of Vote Leave's referendum strategy. He set himself the target of “hacking the political system to win a referendum against almost every force with power and money in politics.” By all accounts, he succeeded—and broke the law in the process. (The U.K. Electoral Commission fined the Vote Leave campaign, which Cummings directed, \$76,000 for election spending offenses.)

The word “hacking” is taken directly from Cummings's blog, infamous for its impenetrable rants about causation theory and smart-assed shots at politicians. But critics would do well to pay attention to the content of these rants—not only to understand the mind behind the Brexit campaign but also to discover how the man who is effectively the CEO of the British government is attempting to confront Europe's populist threat.

You need not read far in order to determine that Cummings has always detested current Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage with the same degree of venom that he holds for Eurocrats in Brussels. This is not just because he thinks Farage is a nasty bigot; it is because he knows that the majority of the United Kingdom likely thinks Farage is a nasty bigot. For Cummings, democracy is nothing but a game—people vote based on whose team they want to be on, not where they align on a left-to-right spectrum. During the referendum campaign, as leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), Farage was bad politics because he put people off the Brexit team: His anti-immigrant public image made leaving the EU look like a nativist cause, and most Brits don't want to self-describe as nativists.

Cummings lays this out in typically stark terms on his blog: If Farage had been the major TV presence instead of Johnson, who was a latecomer to the campaign, “it is extremely plausible that this would have lost us over 600,000 vital middle class votes.” That is not to say that he didn't see immigration as an important issue; he thought that it had to be put across in a respectable manner. This meant adopting the slogan “take back control”—an ingenious metaphor for the general loss of community, confidence, and cultural homogeneity



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across the country—rather than standing beside posters scaremongering about lines of nonwhite migrants and refugees, as Farage did. Again, Cummings summarizes the point with a sharp, sinister remark: “Immigration was a baseball bat that just needed picking up at the right time and in the right way.”

This raises the larger question of why Cummings wanted Brexit in the first place. The answer is even more interesting than the tactics he used to bring it about. At the Nudgestock conference in Folkestone, England, a year after the referendum, an audience member asked Cummings whether he felt guilty for what he had done. “The worst-case scenario for Europe is a return to 1930s-style protectionism and extremism. And to me the EU project, the eurozone project, are driving the growth of extremism,” Cummings replied. “The single most important reason, really, for why I wanted to get out of the EU is I think that it will drain the poison of a lot of political debates. ... UKIP and Nigel Farage would be finished,” he said. “Once there’s democratic control of immigration policy, immigration will go back to being a second- or third-order issue.”

Two years later, his prediction appears to be coming true. Johnson’s new Conservative government has abandoned the Tories’ decadelong commitment to restricting net migration, and immigration has continued to drop down the list of voter priorities. With a Tory team hellbent on implementing the referendum result at the helm of government, Farage’s Brexit Party has begun to suffer at the polls. Farage, sensing his fate, has been quick to proclaim that Cummings was never a “true believer” in the Brexit cause, suggesting that he secretly wanted Britain “bound to the EU.” Nothing could be further from reality.

Cummings's Euroskepticism is iron-clad. He sees a world facing automation, climate change, and the risk of nuclear war, and he thinks that the EU is entirely incapable of responding to these threats. In his eyes, Brussels is a dysfunctional bureaucracy that "regulates to help the worst sort of giant corporate looters defending their position against entrepreneurs." Unaccountable to its citizens and more focused on lining the pockets of its managers than on reform, the EU, he believes, is surrendering control of the 21st century to the United States and China.

Even the staunchest proponent of the European project cannot deny that he has a point. The Brexit negotiations have played out against the backdrop of an EU facing several crises: disputes over Italian debt, continued resentment toward the free movement of people, and waning European influence in the Middle East. These are outcomes of divisions between the northern and southern members, fundamental disagreement over the definition of the term "European," and the difficulty of containing euro and non-euro members within a single legal and constitutional order.

These are not, in and of themselves, bulletproof arguments for Brexit. But coupled with Britain's place outside the eurozone and its historic skepticism of further political integration, they are a possible justification for it. Cummings may think he has wielded the Brexit baton in the same way that he picked up the immigration bat, appearing to bring closure on a divisive issue in order to shift the focus to other priorities. That mentality sets him apart from Farage and populists across the continent. For Farage, Brexit is an end—and would mark the end of his political career. For Cummings, Brexit is only the beginning.

Cummings has never joined any political parties, instead labeling them "a vehicle of convenience." He was headhunted as a Conservative Party advisor in 2001 but promptly quit after offending his Tory bosses when he told them that their

brand was the only thing more unpopular than the European currency. He went on to become an advisor to Michael Gove at the Department for Education—an opportunity to act on his disdain for Britain's civil service. Gove and Cummings nicknamed the government establishment "the blob," made enemies of teachers nationwide, and went on to radically transform the education system, placing state schools under stringent academic standards and fighting grade inflation in secondary examinations.

Cummings is more of an entrepreneur than a politician. Some of his greatest idols are Otto von Bismarck, Richard Feynman, and Sun Tzu. He disdains red tape, empty prestige, and overpaid charlatans; he loves technology, evolutionary psychology, and the science of superforecasting. His greatest interest of all is how to produce high-performance institutions, capable of both making difficult decisions and course-correcting during crises. And he believes that the EU's inability to do either of these things has lent oxygen to populist opportunists.

In laying out his own vision for a post-Brexit Britain, Cummings barely mentions national identity. His concerns are structural, not cultural—he is preoccupied with free trade, not ethnic replacement. He wants to increase skilled immigration and turn the U.K. into a magnet for young scientists from across the world, using the comparative advantages of the country's National Health Service (NHS) to take a lead in the controversial field of genomic medicine (the technology that allows doctors to detect disease risk and cognitive problems in embryos). He even proposes providing open borders to math and computer science Ph.D.s—not out of generosity but out of an absolutist belief in scientific talent—an idea that Johnson has already taken up. Indeed, Cummings uses the word "talent" repeatedly in his writings. The Chinese Communist Party attracts talent, he contends; the EU and U.K. do not.

If liberal democratic values are to

survive, the institutions that defend them require an overhaul. They must be streamlined, democratized, and updated at the same rate as the technology sector. Otherwise, the decisive policymaking of China's authoritarian model—better suited to tackling climate change and other long-term challenges—could make it a serious rival to the West's staid, stagnant bureaucracies.

These arguments played almost no role in the 2016 Brexit referendum, but they will be central to Cummings's plans in the coming months. In July, Johnson's government appointed a top team filled with ethnic minorities, signaling that Brexit can lead to an open future, not an imperial past.

Alongside his former boss Gove, Cummings has been put in charge of ensuring that Britain is ready to leave the EU by the end of October, with or without a deal—a plan that appeared likely until the decision to prorogue Parliament (reportedly the brainchild of Cummings) led to a cross-party revolt in early September that complicated that plan and resulted in the expulsion of more than 20 Conservative rebels from the party, including several former cabinet officials.

Johnson, for his part, has been doing what he does best: running around in campaign mode as his staff handle the busywork. Together, Johnson and Cummings have embarked on a bid to woo disillusioned voters, pledging more than \$4.2 billion to deprived towns and an additional \$2.2 billion in spending for the NHS—as well as more money for the police. It is no surprise that Johnson sees himself as a modern-day Winston Churchill and that Cummings has professed admiration for Alan Brooke, an advisor to the former prime minister.

Whether or not they'll succeed is an open question. The fact that the opposition remains divided will give them a boost: The Labour Party has lost a great deal of credibility in the midst of its own civil war, and the Liberal Democrats' success has split the anti-Brexit vote.

But despite the burst of energy, it is still unlikely that the EU will be willing to negotiate a new deal. The British Parliament has already acted to prevent its government from taking the country out of the EU without a deal, leaving Johnson faced with the choice of asking Brussels for an extension, refusing and thereby ignoring parliamentary law, or resigning and allowing Labour to make the request.

Regardless of the outcome, a general election before the end of the year is likely. If the Tories win a majority, they may then be forced to own the repercussions of a no-deal exit: economic chaos, fresh trade talks with a weakened negotiating hand, and an inevitable confrontation with the Irish government that could threaten the Good Friday Agreement.

Ironically, it is the same civil service whose actions Cummings labeled “Kafka-esque” that he will be relying on to minimize the damage. It is unlikely that the borrowing and spending will bode well for the economy in the long term, but it is possible that the Cummings approach could convince EU partners to negotiate a free trade deal.

He is already attempting to whip the governmental machine into action: early mornings, weekend meetings, and an insistence that leaks will be severely punished. It is a remarkable contrast to Theresa May’s premiership, during which government leaks were rampant and discipline was haphazard. According to Cummings, May fell into the trap of invoking Article 50—the EU treaty’s provision for withdrawal—too early, forcing her to conduct the negotiations on the EU’s terms. She also maintained the line that Leave voters wanted to dramatically reduce immigration, long one of her pet policies, not that they wanted democratic control of immigration policy. Far from uniting the country behind a vision of Brexit, this only contributed to the notion that Brexit was an exercise in nativist nationalism.

Cummings’s plan to thwart the populist surge is far from foolproof. Any

The important question is how Britain can foster a healthy nationalism in the face of populist discontent, not how it can do away with nationalism altogether.

form of national identity that involves an all-out embrace of global capitalism will only be successful if it can include those who believe the globalist game is rigged. That means addressing the educational and economic inequalities that leave people starting at different points in the meritocratic race: eliminating bloated centralized welfare projects, placing more power in the hands of local communities, and responding to genuine concerns about demographic change without scapegoating hardworking immigrants.

And for those who don’t have the skills to contribute to the new economy, British society should offer them the self-respect and resources necessary to be active citizens. But that will only occur if the Johnson government’s words are met with actions and long-forgotten towns are offered public spending and employment opportunities.

Cummings has shown promise in this regard; the education reforms he helped pioneer strengthened state schools by providing them with greater independence, and he detests many ultra-Brexiteers for the fact that they don’t care about the poor. He has even proposed that a negative income tax along the lines of a universal basic income could help counter the wage stagnation that is likely to be prolonged by developments in artificial intelligence. Again, this turns the immigration issue into an economic talking point, not a cultural one: The state can only be held accountable for its citizens if it controls the number of people entering through its borders.

The even deeper tension comes from the clash between Cummings’s faith in technological transformation and the traditional democratic process. Repre-

sentative democracy brings the whole of society into the political sphere, but technology enables a powerful minority to manipulate their fellow citizens—as he knows all too well. Indeed, this is a fact that Cummings seems to embrace, not fear. When he ran the Leave campaign, he spent most of his budget mining data for targeted social media advertising—the kind of blind enthusiasm for dangerous technological tools that has echoes in the Manhattan Project.

But automation and globalization are inevitable, and Cummings recognizes this fact. The important question is how Britain can foster a healthy nationalism in the face of populist discontent, not how it can do away with nationalism altogether. Perhaps Cummings’s answer—to turn the country into a “meritocratic technopolis,” as the *Economist* put it—is a threat, or perhaps it is simply a reality. For an opportunist such as Johnson, it is a delightful opportunity—a chance to go down in history as the man who saved British democracy.

If Brexit was at its core a vehicle for citizens to demonstrate cultural and economic anxiety, it would be one of history’s great ironies that its implementation could marginalize the very populists who promoted it. If Cummings succeeds, it would send a message to countries across the continent: Don’t be afraid to agree with populists in order to defeat them—and don’t hesitate to revolutionize your tired institutions along the way. ■

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Why Huawei Isn't So Scary

The Chinese company's lead in the 5G race isn't insurmountable, and other firms and countries shouldn't rush into the fray.

By Elsa B. Kania and Lindsey R. Sheppard

5G MAY HAVE BECOME A BUZZWORD, but the notion that countries must rush to be first to deploy it is mistaken and reckless—and increases the odds of security breaches. There's no doubt that 5G is important, promising the high speeds and unparalleled connectivity that are required to unleash the full potential of the “internet of things”—the ever-growing network of web-connected devices—and artificial intelligence. 5G could prove critical to economic competitiveness, but not only will a race to install the system end up backfiring, there is also reason to think twice about the claims of China's Huawei that it alone can shape our technological future.

Huawei's marketing—and Chinese government propaganda—has built the impression that it's either Huawei or no way to 5G. The telecommunications firm declares itself the unparalleled leader in 5G as it attempts to secure commercial partnerships around the world, now boasting more than 50 contracts across some 30 countries. In Europe, Huawei has even launched a campaign urging residents to “Vote for 5G,” as if its 5G technologies were the only way for Europe to achieve a smarter future.

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CONVENTIONAL
WISDOM,
UPENDED

Huawei's claims to be No. 1 in 5G can be misleading. Huawei is a leader and a powerhouse, but it is not the only top player. And it isn't clear that the company is winning—at least, not yet. Although Huawei's technological capabilities shouldn't be underestimated, there are reasons to look skeptically at its supposed superiority in 5G.

Huawei's quest for dominance in the global telecommunications industry has involved tactics and practices that are antithetical to fair, healthy competition. That Huawei has amassed a market share estimated at nearly 30 percent of the global telecom equipment industry reflects its capacity to underbid and undercut competitors, not to mention multiple alleged incidents of bribery and corruption. The Chinese firm's determination to provide cheap services and equipment to capture market share often puts intense pressure on competitors. But it's not always a fair fight: Huawei's rise has been enabled by the billions of dollars in support, subsidies, and various benefits it has received from the Chinese government. For instance, Huawei has lines of credit from state-owned banks that reportedly amount to \$100 billion.

Huawei has also been helped by a business culture in which theft is often encouraged—even outright incentivized. At best, some of its activities, such as the aggressive recruitment of talent from rivals, may be considered standard practice within the industry. At worst, however, Huawei’s business practices violate legal boundaries. There have been numerous accusations of intellectual property theft, as well as ongoing reports of attempts to expropriate sensitive technologies, from the early copying of Cisco source code to military technology. And what these dubious practices reveal is that Huawei is in fact not as cutting-edge as its publicity claims.

The idea that Huawei has an insurmountable lead in the 5G race also represents a failure of observers to distinguish its carefully crafted image from any real technological edge. To be sure, Huawei has long pursued 5G. Since 2007, it has invested massively in next-generation telecommunications, spending more than \$60 billion on research and development over the course of a decade. And the company now plans to increase its 5G investments as part of an annual R&D budget that may exceed \$15 billion.

Huawei truly does provide mature and cost-effective equipment. It is one of the few players offering an end-to-end 5G solution, with particular strengths in radio access networking. However, it’s unclear how well the company’s systems integrate with existing 4G infrastructure from other vendors. The security of Huawei’s products has been assessed to be subpar, and the long-term performance of its 5G networks also remains questionable. Countries that choose this low-cost option for fear of losing out in the 5G race risk creating an unstable and insecure foundation for their future societies and economies.

Although Huawei may assert that it has already taken an unbeatable lead in 5G infrastructure, judging who’s

truly ahead in the field means looking at multiple criteria. Such indicators can include commercial contracts, deployed performance, integration with network infrastructure, and real technological innovation. For example, Huawei has claimed that it has more 5G patents than all U.S. companies combined, but quantity does not necessarily correlate with quality—especially in China, where patents are often of dubious value.

Huawei CEO Ren Zhengfei has declared that his company’s dream is to “stand on top of the world.” But the global supply chain remains highly interdependent—a point of leverage that Washington is seeking to exploit by potentially limiting Huawei’s access to U.S. technologies. Moreover, Huawei’s competitors have their own core strengths among the fundamental technologies that will shape 5G. And although Huawei’s promise of relative vertical integration may offer efficiencies, the diversity of competitive suppliers continues to drive both competition and innovation. A number of companies based in the United States, European Union, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan are also industry leaders and major providers throughout the supply chain. A healthy ecosystem for telecommunications would be based on market diversity and fair competition and would emphasize the importance of regulatory bodies, standards, and industry alliances to ensure security and interoperability.

Monopolies are obviously bad for business—and for security. For instance, even if Huawei were to improve on its own security, a single vulnerability, even a bug believed to be entirely inadvertent, could cause global damage if the company is as dominant as it hopes to be.

The real fight in 5G is not about rapid deployment but about the critical underlying technologies that will become the future of 5G. From R&D to deployment and maintenance, policymakers and mobile network opera-

tors should prioritize applying rigorous standards for security. In the process, it is critical to safeguard competition in a diverse marketplace to drive technological innovation. Some industry experts have estimated that 5G non-standalone systems will operate alongside 4G LTE networks for as many as 15 years while true 5G ecosystems mature.

For all of Huawei’s grandstanding, its competitors are also gaining ground. Huawei’s apparent advantages are hardly unassailable in an industry that is continuing to evolve so rapidly. Those countries and mobile network operators that opt not to work with Huawei, whether out of concern for security or to protect competition, will have other viable options. Nokia has been catching up with Huawei in deals on the ground, Samsung and Ericsson are also receiving new contracts for major 5G projects, and Qualcomm is continuing to demonstrate new inventions in 5G.

The future of 5G is still taking shape. The standards and foundational technologies that will underpin it are still works in progress. The U.S. government, in coordination with a range of allies and partners, can step into the fray by bolstering support for R&D, including expanding funding for academic research on next-generation technologies, and by providing tax credits to incentivize investment in the technology while actively supporting initiatives that aim to foster a more inclusive and competitive ecosystem. The United States and like-minded countries must continue to explore options to ensure that the 5G future will be secure and competitive. ■

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arguments

How Marine Le Pen Is Making a Comeback, One French Village at a Time

The former National Front has a new name and a new strategy: to pave the way to power by winning city hall after city hall.

By Karina Piser

I "I'M GOING TO DO EVERYTHING TO WIN," Dorian Munoz, who leads the far-right National Rally's youth outreach in the Var region of southern France, told me in a recent interview. He's just 27, but he's running for mayor in La Seyne-sur-Mer, one of the region's only remaining left-leaning cities.

For months now, the National Rally—formerly the National Front—has been aggressively campaigning for the March 2020 municipal elections. It comes after the party's success in last May's European Parliament elections, in which it won 23 percent of the national vote, ahead of President Emmanuel Macron's centrist En Marche. And in its strongholds—the northern mining basin, where unemployment is high, and along the Mediterranean coast, where the memory of the Algerian war still resonates—its numbers soared, in some areas exceeding 40 percent.

"Local politics is what we do best," Munoz said. "It's in the DNA of the party: We're never not on the ground." In just one year of outreach, he said, he has doubled party membership in La Seyne.

As the National Rally seeks to shed its image as a political pariah and settle into the mainstream, municipal elections have emerged as an indispensable strategy. During the last round, in 2014, it made unprecedented gains, winning mayoral races in some 12 small and midsize cities. And while big cities are generally out of reach, the party has found a sweet spot in municipalities like La Seyne, which has a population of around 65,000.

Although the strategy has yet to translate into national gains, the party has decided that chipping away at local

offices will be critical to its long-term success. Marine Le Pen, who has presided over the National Rally since 2011, has for years worked to distance it from her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, a notorious racist who called the Nazi gas chambers a "detail of history." So far, that has entailed policy shifts on issues including same-sex marriage, the death penalty, and the euro—not ceding ground on immigration or relinquishing its regular tirades against Muslims but developing talking points on other issues, too.

Indeed, since its municipal victories in 2014, the National Rally has decided that consolidating its local presence will not only solidify its normalization but also show voters that its representatives are good managers. Up until now, the party's rebranding has been ideological; now, its approach to local politics demonstrates a tactical evolution, too.

Le Pen's leadership has been central to this shift: She has invested in a new generation of party activists, and that starts at the local level. In small cities and towns, the National Rally "is



very effective at finding new talent to diversify and ‘youthify’ itself,” said Dorit Geva, a political sociologist at Central European University who focuses on the European far-right. Le Pen has worked to empower party activists in their 20s—such as Munoz, running in La Seyne, and David Rachline, who was just 26 when he was elected mayor of the southeastern city of Fréjus in 2014. (He also managed Le Pen’s 2017 presidential campaign.)

Mayors enjoy higher approval ratings than any other elected officials in France, according to an August survey conducted by the polling agency Ifop. And while its forays into local leadership haven’t always gone well—in the mid-1990s, a then-National Front mayor sent the city of Toulon into debt and eventually left office marred by scandal—its recent experiences indicate that local offices are a good place to start.

That strategic objective—small electoral gains that will burnish the party’s image, undoing the taboo that hovers over it in order to generate more significant wins down the line—is driv-

Marine Le Pen visits Châteaudouble, a village in southern France, on Sept. 12, 2018.

ing the party’s focus on local offices. A National Rally mayor, whose primary responsibilities are to manage daily life and keep the streets clean, passes for an effective technocrat more easily than a far-right ideologue.

It’s a tactic the party calls *rayonnement*: Put a mayor in office in one town, and his or her influence will “radiate” across the region. What followed the 2014 municipal elections shows that *rayonnement* can work. Steeve Briois’s 2014 victory in the northern town of Hénin-Beaumont, for example, paved the way for further success in the area; the National Rally managed to show that it wasn’t just “capable of winning an absolute majority ... but that it could manage a municipality of significant size,” the political scientists Jérôme Fourquet and Sylvain Manternach wrote in a recent study. In 2015, the National Rally won six cantons in the region and made further gains in the legislative elections that followed two years later.

Similarly, when Robert Ménard—an independent elected with the party’s backing—became mayor of Béziers in 2014, he not only transformed the southern city but earned a following, inspiring “Ménardist” candidates to make gains in three neighboring cantons in elections the following year.

That doesn’t mean that the National Rally’s mayoral candidates shed their partisan affiliation during their campaigns or time in office. Julien Sanchez, who in 2014 became mayor of Beaucaire, in southern France, has pushed to make pork a requirement in school cafeterias, targeting Muslims and Jews; Ménard has called Islam “insoluble in democracy,” launched an offensive against kebab shops, and recently barred hijab-wearing women from participating in a wellness festival; and during his campaign, Rachline pledged to halt construction of a new mosque and cut funding to non-profit organizations serving Muslims.

But those ideological battles often get buried in the stuff of local politics. On a recent sunny afternoon in

downtown Fréjus, shop owners were effusive in their praise for the mayor. Anouar El-Harti, who immigrated to France from Morocco as a child, told me that Rachline had changed his perception of the National Rally entirely. The young mayor had given “new life” to shop owners, “made Fréjus dynamic,” and “attracted tourists,” he said.

“In 2017, I didn’t vote Le Pen for president,” Harti said, citing the party’s long-standing reputation as a xenophobic, anti-Islam movement. “But in 2022,” when the next presidential elections are set to take place, “I’d very much consider it,” he said, because he has been so taken with Rachline’s governance.

But other locals stressed that even if they’re pleased with Rachline’s leadership—he has lifted Fréjus out of debt—they’d never vote for the National Rally in other elections. “When I vote for a mayor, I vote for the person,” said a chocolatier in her 50s, who declined to give her name. “On a national or European level, it’s different.” When I asked if she was deterred by Rachline’s embrace of the National Rally’s rhetoric on immigration, she shrugged. “Of course there’s the anti-immigrant aspect. But before, Fréjus was bankrupt.”

Geva, the sociologist, attributes this attitude to the nature of the political system in France, where local politics aren’t necessarily a path to national power. But the party isn’t in a rush. “They’re making sure they’ll be represented at all levels, to show that they’re effective at governance, and eventually that’ll make them more legitimate as a national party,” she said. And it’s clear that, at least on a small scale, a popular National Rally mayor can effectively convince voters that the party’s ideological core is just an aside.

The current political climate will help. The March municipal elections will be the first domestic vote since the yellow vest protests broke out late last year, when opposition to a fuel tax hike inspired a broad denunciation of inequality and elitism. Le Pen is fully aware that yellow vest fervor was par-

ticularly strong in the regions where her party tends to enjoy support, such as the southeast and the north.

Although the movement was apolitical, the National Rally is well positioned to seize on its anti-establishment sentiment and demands for a solid social safety net; Le Pen’s ideological rebranding has in part involved a more robust defense of the welfare state. And Macron, whose neoliberal economic reforms have enraged voters since he took office, is a perfect target.

The National Rally also intends to surf on the fragmentation of France’s establishment parties—especially the center-right Republicans, long a major national force, who are increasingly hampered by internal divisions.

“The right wing lacks a leader, a charismatic figure, creating a historic opportunity for the National Rally,” said Jean-Yves Camus, an expert on the far-right at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. “Socialists become Macron, Republicans become En Marche,” Le Pen joked at a recent rally. She’s already actively courting members of the traditional right, hoping to capitalize on the Republicans’ political disarray ahead of the March vote.

That involves both targeting center-right municipalities—such as Brignoles, in the Var, and Perpignan, near the border with Spain—and trying to convince disillusioned Republicans to join National Rally candidate lists.

Le Pen is optimistic; she recently called the municipal elections a “first step” toward the 2022 presidential vote. “Each election is an opportunity for our political family to attach another carabiner on the slope leading up to the summit,” she declared at a party rally in Fréjus on Sept. 15. “And the summit is the Élysée.”

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A 1901 map shows the reach of the British Empire, in red.



The British Empire's Broken Legacies

Kashmir and Hong Kong show how the damage done by imperialism still lingers. *By Amy Hawkins*

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THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE SUN NEVER SET ON THE BRITISH EMPIRE. That's long gone, but the grubby legacy of imperialism remains in Asia, where two seemingly distinct crises—in Hong Kong and Kashmir—share similar antecedents.

Hong Kong has seen months of demonstrations as millions of people from all walks of life call for greater democratic freedoms in the region. The police have responded brutally while Beijing described the protests as “terrorism.”

In Jammu and Kashmir, nearly 2,500 miles away, the Indian government suddenly revoked the region's special status, previously protected in the Indian Constitution, on Aug. 5.

New Delhi has imposed a digital and telecommunications blackout in Kashmir, so much less is known about what is happening there. But on Aug. 10, the BBC released a video showing tear gas and live ammunition being used against protesters after Friday prayers in Srinagar, the region's largest city. The *New York Times* reported on hospitals bereft of staff and locals beaten up for venturing outside to buy milk; one doctor described the situation as a “living hell.” As Muslims the world over celebrated Eid al-Adha, NDTV reported that mosques in Srinagar were closed, and the whole state was put under curfew, with some prominent local politicians placed under house arrest.

Both Kashmir and Hong Kong are struggling to define their own destinies against hostile and domineering central governments. Both are supposedly autonomous but part of wider imperial powers ruled by nationalist strongmen in which the notion of regional identity has become anathema. And in both cases, British colonialism paved the way for the conflicts to come.

Unlike Hong Kong, India went from being a colonial subject to an independent country. But 40 percent of pre-independence India, including Kashmir, had been governed as “princely states”—an imprecise arrangement by which a local ruler commanded authority, with varying levels of interference from the British Raj. As long as these states didn't directly challenge imperial rule, they were largely left to their own devices. As part of a united and independent India, however, especially under the rampant nationalism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central government has prioritized cultural homogenization. Parallels to this process can also be seen in Hong Kong, where the Beijing government is gradually replacing the local Cantonese language and traditional script with an emphasis on Mandarin and simplified characters.

This insistence on cultural homogenization is a marked difference from the days of empire. But Jon Wilson, the author of *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos of Empire*, notes that while the governing project in India now is different from the ideology under British rule, the instruments of power that Modi is using are familiar: "military occupation, limitations on free speech, [these tools] that have at various times been used by India look like empire."

Constitutionally, there was supposed to be some continuity in governance in the transition from the colonial to the post-colonial era in Hong Kong and Kashmir. Both regions were recognized as being distinct from the countries that they were becoming part of and granted special protections on that basis. In Hong Kong, the "one country, two systems" framework was supposed to guarantee Hong Kongers their way of life until 2047.

In Kashmir, these protections were even more robust, enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Article 370 stated that Kashmir controlled its own affairs—apart from foreign policy, defense, or communications—and Article 35A restricted outsiders from buying land. "Under Article 370, it's arguable that Kashmir had more independence than any part of India. It gave Kashmir more autonomy over its own affairs on a regional basis," Wilson said. But both articles were revoked by Modi, making good on his election promise to end Kashmir's special status, which he said had hindered its integration with the rest of India.

In Hong Kong, Beijing has not explicitly scrapped "one country, two systems," but this year's events have made clear that the region's rapid assimilation

into China is a priority for the Chinese Communist Party. The patchwork arrangement that characterized the British Empire in Asia is no longer tolerated by the leaders who inherited the imperial spoils—the goal is now total control.

Unlike in Kashmir, there was no bloodshed during the Hong Kong handover in 1997, but the irony of freeing the region from years of British imperialism only to hand it over to another distant and unaccountable leader was apparent to many. Chris Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, recalled visiting a psychiatric hospital shortly before the handover. One patient asked him: "You always tell us that Britain is the oldest democracy in the world. So could you explain to me why you are handing over Hong Kong to the last great totalitarian regime without asking the opinion of the people of Hong Kong?" Patten had no answer.

Today, the fallout from Britain's absent-minded imperial management is making itself clear. Since India is often hailed as Asia's great democratic success, one might hope its treatment of minority groups would be different from China, whose government does not allow for dissenting views. But recent events in Kashmir are strikingly similar to Chinese policies that seek to homogenize autonomous regions into a Beijing-defined image of China.

Dibyesh Anand, a professor at the University of Westminster who has written about India's plan to incorporate Kashmir into a Hindu nation, said: "While it was fashionable to contrast democratic India with authoritarian China, the reality is that when it comes to occupying and governing territories and peoples that have contested relations with the mainland,

both the countries have adopted measures including the promise of autonomy, reality of assimilation, suppression of rights, denial of self-determination, and absence of consensual rule." Anand argues that, in addition to "divide and rule," the British Empire pursued a policy of "divide and quit." This left behind unsatisfactory arrangements that were likely to ferment into conflict later down the line.

It is not solely Britain's fault that two of its former colonies are embroiled in battles over their identities. Kashmir has been plagued by decades of sectarian fighting, and the terms of the Hong Kong handover were supposed to last for 50 years. Nor is it clear how Britain could directly help ameliorate these situations today; China routinely portrays any opposition in its realm as a manifestation of foreign interference. Similarly, India has always insisted that Kashmir must be an internal issue.

But Britain could do more to recognize its contribution to the discontent of millions of people who have never had a say in their own governance. It is even difficult for former subjects to visit the country that decided their futures: Pakistan, for example, has one of the highest refusal rates in the world for citizens applying for U.K. visas—more than 6 in 10 applications are rejected. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has so far said little on either matter, beyond reiterating Britain's support for the clearly dysfunctional "one country, two systems" arrangement in Hong Kong and thanking India for a "clear readout" of the situation in Kashmir. It is no surprise that Britain, where imperial nostalgia fueled some of the sentiment behind Brexit, is reluctant to grapple with the empire's messy legacy. But it is worth remembering, as the country tears itself apart over arguments about what self-determination and democracy really mean, that its legacy in other parts of the world is even more fraught. ■

It is no surprise that Britain, where imperial nostalgia fueled some of the sentiment behind Brexit, is reluctant to grapple with the empire's messy legacy.

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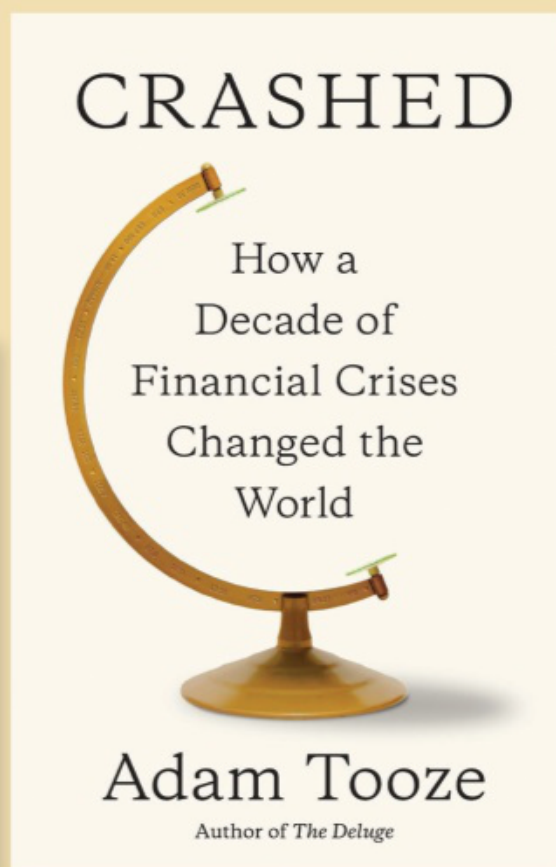


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Let a Thousand Parties Bloom

**THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT
AMERICA'S TWO-PARTY SYSTEM FROM
SUCCUMBING TO EXTREMISM IS TO
SCRAP IT ALTOGETHER.**

BY **LEE DRUTMAN**

SOMEWHERE IN THE MULTIVERSE, the United States took a slightly different turn on Nov. 8, 2016. Hillary Clinton narrowly won Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan and became the 45th president of the United States. This version of Earth—let's call it Earth 2—is a safer, less polluted planet than our own.

But U.S. democracy in this alternate reality is no less precarious. The Republican Congress on Earth 2 is fiercely relitigating every old Clinton scandal and boldly innovating new ones. In the 2018 Earth 2 midterms, Republicans gained seats in both chambers by running against Clinton and promising to finally “lock her up.” The right-wing media echo chamber froths at the prospect of impeaching both Clinton and Vice President Tim Kaine and making newly selected House Speaker Mark Meadows president.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump remains a media personality and the front-runner for the 2020 election, though Sens. Ted Cruz, Tom Cotton, and Josh Hawley are outdoing each

other for recognition as the most belligerent fighter against the so-called globalist Democratic Party and its anti-Christian socialist agenda. Right-wing militias, meanwhile, have more than doubled in membership after the so-called stolen election of 2016 and are preparing for a civil war if Democrats steal the 2020 election, too.

The problems of U.S. politics are deeper than the results of a single presidential election. They reflect a binary party system that has divided the country into two irreconcilable teams: one that sees itself as representing the multicultural values of cosmopolitan cities and the other that sees itself as representing the Christian values of the traditionalist countryside. Both believe they are the true America. The many individuals and groups that don't slot neatly into one of these two teams have no other place to go.



Climate change is proceeding faster than expected, as China's economic and political rise continues. Americans can't afford a broken system while policy problems worsen. But no problems can be solved until the divisive, zero-sum, polarized politics breaking U.S. democracy are dissolved. The only way out is to change the U.S. electoral system to allow for more parties and hope the pieces can rearrange themselves into a functional governing system.

U.S. POLITICAL HISTORY HAS SHAPED today's disasters. In 1787, the Framers thought the existing Articles of Confederation were inadequate. The new Constitution reflected a happy confluence of pragmatic politics and political theory centered on the premise that while a central government was necessary, it should require broad compromise across many competing interests to take decisive action.

Even if some of the pragmatic summer-of-'87 deals wilt under modern scrutiny—most notably the compromises over slavery—the underlying theory is still mostly sound: Forging broad deal-making is a tried-and-true path to sustainable, legitimate government. But it requires that lawmakers be flexible enough to form coalitions on an issue-by-issue basis. “Extend the sphere,” James Madison wrote in Federalist No. 10, “and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens.” More factions would mean less likelihood of any faction being a majority. Making laws would require broad compromise. Broad compromise would prevent tyranny.

A divided two-party system makes effective governing difficult under any political system, but almost impossible given U.S. governing institutions, by sacrificing the flexibility of officials to party discipline. But while the Founding Fathers thought and worried a lot about divisive partisanship (as John Adams warned, “a Division of the Republic into two great Parties ... is to be dreaded as the greatest political Evil”), they gave little

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thought to electoral mechanisms to prevent partisanship from becoming too divisive. That's forgivable. At the time, national electoral precedents were few, and the Framers unthinkingly imported Britain's simple 1430 innovation of place-based, first-past-the-post elections. This enabled the almost immediate formation of a two-party system, with Thomas Jefferson and Madison's power-to-the-people Democratic-Republicans teaming up against the more trust-the-elites Federalist Party of Alexander Hamilton, Adams, and (more or less) George Washington.

But for most of U.S. history, the two parties were sprawling, mixed-up coalitions of state and local groups—and thus flexible enough to compete in most places with different faces and with enough overlap to make deals in Washington. Much as critics complained about the lack of meaningful choices and complex, parochial logroll politics, incoherent and nonideological parties worked well with U.S. governing institutions. Weak partisanship allowed majority coalitions to come together on an issue-by-issue basis—just as the Framers had intended.

In the 1960s, the old system gave way. Civil rights shook U.S. politics and set in motion a decades-long realignment of the party coalitions. Politics nationalized, and pragmatic economic materialism gave way to culture wars and fights over national identity. By the 1990s, conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans began to go extinct, unable to survive in this new environment, leaving only liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. By 2010, America became a genuine two-party system, with two distinct party coalitions.

Partisan polarization thus took on a reinforcing dynamic in which the parties pulled further apart, the electoral stakes grew higher, and the thought of voting for the other party seemed more anathema. The electoral system reinforced this divide in profound ways. Because winner-take-all elections offer no reward for winning less than a majority vote share in a given district, Republicans abandoned the urban districts, and Democrats closed up shop in rural districts. The parties stopped competing for each other's voters and instead swiveled to their most loyal supporters.

But it wasn't only the urban-rural divide shaping partisan conflict. Other social identities—including race, religion, and region—sorted between the parties, turning partisanship into one overwhelming “mega-identity,” to quote the political scientist Lilliana Mason.

With the country becoming more diverse, and previously marginalized groups suddenly gaining status, the two parties had greater reason to emphasize the zero-sum nature of their deeply divided competition. And with two parties of roughly equal electoral strength, every election felt up for grabs. Meanwhile, the economy shifted, rewarding the highly educated in the knowledge economy, especially in the thriving cities, and punishing the poorly educated, especially in the industrial, resource extraction, and agricultural heartland. Inequality grew everywhere, fueling resentment.

Under these pressures, and with more and more corporate and billionaire money pouring into politics to exacerbate the inequalities, America's complicated political system groaned, shuddered, and began to crack. Resentment and distrust fed on each other, and in zero-sum politics, where everything became about winning and losing, Trump, the blustering alpha male who promised only winning, rose to the top. He crowd-surfed the waves of resentment-fueled polarization into a presidency so divisive that very few Americans' opinions have changed about its merits since day one.

WHERE DO WE START UNTANGLING the raveled spool of trends and forces that produced the current mess? The temptation is to pull first on the ugliest and most obvious knots.

Take the Electoral College, that cockamamie Rube Goldberg mechanism that never quite worked as intended. By any measure of democratic fairness, the Electoral College is awful: The larger your state, the less your vote counts. The less competitive your state, the less anybody cares about your vote. Five times in U.S. history (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016), it delivered the White House to the popular vote *loser*—Trump among them.

Of course, a national popular vote is fairer, especially if a new electoral law could ensure a true majority winner through a two-round system or an instant-runoff, ranked-choice voting mechanism. But the Electoral College is a difficult knot to untangle right now. It's in the Constitution—amendable in theory but in practice stuck in place as long as one party sees an advantage in the status quo. The current popular workaround, a compact among states to abide by the popular vote winner, is supported only by solidly blue states.

Abolishing the Electoral College would certainly boost Democrats' chances of winning

A national popular vote for president without a change to the Senate or House will keep reinforcing the same divisive politics.

the White House, at least given current demographics and party voting coalitions. Congress, however, would present the same problems. The Senate—which apportions two members to each state, regardless of size—has even more of a rural, small-state bias than the Electoral College. And that means that while the partisan divide remains an urban-rural split, the Senate will have a strong Republican bias. The House also has a pro-rural and therefore pro-Republican bias. That's because, as the party of the cities, Democratic voters are overconcentrated in solidly safe districts, while Republican voters are spread more efficiently—an asymmetry exacerbated by Republican gerrymandering. A national popular vote for president without a change to the Senate or House will keep reinforcing the same divisive politics.

End gerrymandering? Of course. But how? Independent commissions are an improvement over politicians drawing maps for partisan advantage. But with parties divided between cities and rural areas, drawing competitive districts is hard. And, again, because Democrats are overconcentrated in cities, ensuring partisan fairness will come at the cost of other districting goals. Single-member districts limit the possibilities.

Make it easier to vote? Absolutely. But for six decades, reform after reform has made it easier to vote in the United States, and turnout has barely budged. That's because competition, candidates, and campaigns drive turnout, far more than rules. Few elections are competitive. Few candidates are inspiring. And few campaigns invest in serious voter mobilization. In the current political environment, higher turnout would likely help Democrats win more elections on the margins. But that won't solve the zero-sum partisan polarization at the heart of the political crisis.

Encourage more civility and tolerance in politics? Of course. But notice what has happened to the few remaining politicians who have charted a path of civility and moderation in recent years? They've retired, either because they feared they'd lose their next primary or because they felt so alone in a world of total partisan warfare.

Better ethics regulations? Again, sure. But ethics rules are only as good as their enforcement and congressional

oversight. In a normal world, bipartisan majorities would have supported Trump's impeachment already. But in highly partisan politics, even facts become selective, partisan things.

Campaign finance reform? Of course. The U.S. campaign finance system is a porous and poorly regulated mess. In a perfect world, there would be publicly funded elections or at least small-donor-oriented elections with public matching (a significant provision contained in House Democrats' HR 1, a major pro-democracy bill passed this year). This might actually reduce polarization a little. As the political scientist Andrew B. Hall has shown in his new book, *Who Wants to Run?: How the Devaluing of Political Office Drives Polarization*, the high costs of campaigning deter many moderates but provide less of an obstacle for passionate extremists.

But polarization needs to be sharply reduced, not just trimmed. Or at the least, it has to work with, rather than against, America's governing institutions. Under the two-party system, U.S. politics are stuck in a deep partisan divide, with no clear winner and only zero-sum escalation ahead. Both sides see themselves as the true majority. Republicans hold up maps of the country showing a sea of red and declare America a conservative country. Democrats win the popular vote (because most Americans live in and around a handful of densely populated cities) and declare America a progressive country.

THE ONLY WAY TO BREAK THIS DESTRUCTIVE STALEMATE is to break the electoral and party system that sustains and reinforces it. The United States is divided into red and blue not because Americans want only two choices. In poll after poll, majorities want more than two political parties. Few Americans enjoy the high-stakes partisan combat. The United States is divided because in winner-take-all plurality elections, third parties can't emerge. And even if Americans agree on wanting a third party, few are willing to gamble on an alternative for fear of wasting their vote. Nor can Americans agree on which third party they would want, either. The United States

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would need five or six parties to represent the true ideological diversity of the country.

All else equal, modest multiparty democracies (with three to seven parties) perform better than two-party democracies. Such a party system regularizes cross-partisan compromise and coalition building. Since parties need to work together to govern, more viewpoints are likely to be considered. The resulting policies are more likely to be broadly inclusive, and broadly legitimate, making voters happier with the outcomes.

Some might cite Brazil, Italy, or Israel as paradigmatic and thus cautionary cases of chaotic multiparty democracy. But these are very different countries. Political culture and political history both matter tremendously. Brazil and Italy have long histories of corruption that challenge any party system, and Israel is perpetually surrounded by hostile enemies. Brazil and Israel have too many parties, the result of electoral rules that make legislative representation too easy for parties to obtain, rather than too hard. A sweet spot is between four and six parties—enough to give voters meaningful choices, and offer coalitional variety, but not so much to fragment a polity and make coalition management difficult. Comparing countries is always difficult, but the more appropriate comparisons for the United States would be the modest multiparty democracies of Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia—hardly dysfunctional polities.

To facilitate more parties, first-past-the-post elections have to go. The search for a replacement should start with the Fair Representation Act, which Democratic Rep. Don Beyer has introduced, adopting a system that Ireland has used successfully for almost 100 years. It proposes to combine existing congressional districts to elect multiple members per district. Instead of each of five districts selecting its own top finisher, one larger district would send its top five finishers to Washington, using ranked-choice voting. The result would be a system of modest proportional representation.

I'd suggest going even further than Beyer's bill: Try increasing the House to 700 members to make it more representative and getting rid of primary elections, instead letting party leaders nominate their own candidates, as parties in other democracies do. A single, proportional November election would give challengers space to run as third-party candidates—as well as fourth-, fifth-,

and maybe even sixth-party challengers. All of these changes are fully within the Constitution and have historical precedent. Before 1842, states regularly used multimember districts. Up through the early 20th century, the House increased its membership almost every decade, and there were no primary elections.

The Senate is harder to make proportional since the Constitution limits states to two senators. But similarly eliminating primaries and using ranked-choice voting—which wouldn't require constitutional changes—would do much to dissolve the zero-sum partisanship alongside a transformed House.

Democrats would probably split into two parties: The Social Democrats, representing the very progressive left, and the New Democrats, representing the center-left. Republicans would probably split into three: a center-right Reform Conservative Party (think Marco Rubio), a consistently conservative Christian Republican Party (think Cruz), and a populist-nationalist America First Party (think Trump). Maybe a small Libertarian Party would win some seats. As with most other advanced democracies, coalition government would prevail. Politics would grow more complex. But some complexity is a virtue in politics. It forces citizens and politicians to think harder, to be less certain.

Elections would be competitive everywhere because every vote would now matter. Increased competition would boost turnout because campaigns mobilize more voters when elections are competitive. And with more parties, more voters would feel represented. This is why turnout is consistently higher in proportional democracies. Gerrymandering would disappear since it only works with single-member districts and predictable two-party voting patterns (the main reason why it is a uniquely American problem).

Presidential politics would become more complicated. Rather than counting on a reliable 40-45 percent of partisan voters in the two-party system, candidates would succeed by building broad electoral coalitions and governing supermajorities. Presidents would no longer depend on automatic partisan majorities in Congress to cut them a free pass—but nor would opposing parties in Congress deny a president everything for the sake of winning the next election. Instead, cross-party coalition bargaining would return to Washington. This would likely mean governing again from the

Democrats would probably split into two parties. Republicans would probably split into three. Maybe a small Libertarian Party would win some seats.

middle. Ideally, the presidential election system would evolve into a national popular vote, with ranked-choice voting to ensure majority support. But this is more likely to pass under a new, multiparty system.

Unlike many other reforms being proposed, changing the electoral rules to open up the party system doesn't clearly benefit either Democrats or Republicans. Instead, it would effectively break both of them up. While leaders in both parties would likely oppose such reforms, enough entrepreneurial politicians chafing at top-down leadership might embrace a change that gives them new opportunities. Few elected officials enjoy the zero-sum binary polarization strangling Washington. And solid majorities of both Democratic and Republican voters say they want more than two political parties—a rare demand with bipartisan support. Certainly, solving the problems depends on more than having the right political institutions; it also depends on leadership, creativity, and some luck. Institutions are ultimately tools. But while the right tools can never promise success, the wrong tools can ensure failure.

Electoral reform to facilitate multiparty democracy would not fix everything in U.S. democracy. But democracy is not a problem to be solved. It's an ongoing struggle in the still improbable task of self-governance in the face of imponderable scale and wicked cross-generational problems.

U.S. democracy faces many challenges. But the core problem is a two-party system that has divided the country into two distinct parties representing two competing visions of national identity, with no middle ground, and a political system that requires broad compromise to do anything. Until we solve this fundamental issue, we're just tugging at the knotted ends of a tangled spool while the clock ticks and this world, Earth 2, and any other alternative futures all hang in the balance. ■

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The Upside of Populism



**THE SAME IMPULSE
THAT BROUGHT TRUMP
TO POWER COULD SAVE
U.S. DEMOCRACY.**

**BY DARON ACEMOGLU
AND JAMES A. ROBINSON**

PICTURE AN ERA OF RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, economic growth, and globalization that benefits only some. With inequality mounting, social anxiety is high. A severe recession starting with a financial panic spreads to the whole economy. A movement blaming immigrants and pining for a return to an old, idyllic age gathers steam. Trust in institutions is decimated, and the leaders of the new movement blame politicians for scheming against common people. “From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice,” a new party says, “we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.” The scene is set for a combustible mix of social resentment and economic discontent that could bring down the country’s institutional edifice.

We are describing the United States, of course, just not in the 2010s. In the 1890s, the scheming elites were the railway, steel, petroleum, and finance tycoons—the “robber barons,” who had enriched themselves partly thanks to their political connections. The financial crisis is not that of 2007-2008 but the panic of 1893. The political betrayal is not by lobbyists and super PACs but the “treason of the Senate,” as a series of articles in *Cosmopolitan* magazine called it, which is controlled by the robber barons. Anti-immigrant rhetoric isn’t coming from the Republican establishment but from the People’s Party, a left-wing populist outfit whose Omaha Platform of 1892 fretted about tramps and millionaires and condemned “the fallacy of protecting American labor under the present system, which opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world and crowds out our wage-earners.”

Many feared that these grievances and the social movements they fueled would upend U.S. democracy and liberty. But something quite different happened. As it turned out, populism, rather than paving the way to institutional collapse, had an upside. As a broad-based reaction to mounting economic and political inequalities, it was helpful—perhaps even necessary—for setting the country back on a more sustainable course. The same might be true today.

BACK IN THE 1800S, THE PEOPLE’S PARTY gradually declined and merged with the urban middle classes under the umbrella of the progressive movement. Although the progressives had their own share of anti-immigrant activists, religious bigots, racists, and even eugenicists among them, the movement managed to build a broad coalition and articulate demands not just for

As in the Gilded Age, people suspect that institutions have turned against them or at the very least have ignored their plight.

dismantling existing institutions but also for building new ones. So broad was the coalition that it even managed to win over some Republicans and shift the agenda of that party toward trustbusting and other political reforms.

And so, progressive Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson were able to rejuvenate U.S. democracy and liberty by reforming political and economic institutions rather than tearing them down. Senators started being directly elected, undercutting the ability of wealthy tycoons to control the political process as blatantly as before. In 1913, progressives beat an obstructive Supreme Court and ratified the 16th Amendment, which introduced a federal income tax—something progressives believed would help redistribute income away from the wealthiest. All of these goals had been part of the Omaha Platform, and these reforms made the country stronger and spread prosperity much more broadly than it had been during the Gilded Age.

To achieve its objectives, progressivism had to compromise to build a big enough coalition to reform the system. It embraced racist Jim Crow practices in the South and advocated imperialism on the world stage. Progressivism made life better for most Americans, but it restricted whom it counted as full citizens. African Americans were largely left out, and the country became much less welcoming to immigrants.

THE STRUGGLES OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA and today are not unusual. Democracy and liberty don’t emerge or survive easily. When they do, it is through a constant conflict between different interests and social forces.

Although the particulars differ in each case, on one side of the fight are typically those who are economically, socially, and politically privileged and who control state institutions. Against them are nonelites who do not enjoy such special privileges and don’t have access to the same resources. Liberty doesn’t result when one group wins this tussle. On the contrary, whenever one side becomes too strong, it spells the extinction of liberty.

For example, when the state and elites become too powerful, it paves the way to a kind of despotism that silences or coerces the others to go along with it (think China). But

nonelites can mobilize, contest power, and fight back too—not just with their numbers but also with their norms and sometimes organizations. When they become too powerful, the result is not liberty but the disabling of the state. As they disobey and dismantle state institutions, those institutions atrophy, laws become ineffective, liberty gets eroded, and the key functions of government fall by the wayside (think Mexico today, where President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was swept to power by a populist wave and is working to personalize power, increase presidential discretion, and weaken institutions).

Squeezed between the despotic state and the impaired one, however, we find a narrow corridor, a small path on which liberty can rise.

It is a corridor because life there is never stationary. The struggle between state and society is constant. Sometimes the elites will further enrich themselves, and state institutions will become more domineering, requiring society to become more assertive. Sometimes state institutions will decay as nonelites push too hard, and elites and nonelites will have to work together for their rebuilding. In the best-case scenario, when society believes that it can rein in state institutions if necessary, it becomes willing to trust them and let them do more to regulate the economy, provide public services, and enact and enforce more effective laws. But the corridor is narrow because this balance is precarious.

WHAT THREATENED U.S. DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTY during the Gilded Age were conflicts, grievances, and mistrust between elites and society. Elites became more and more adept at using the law and state institutions for their own benefit (reportedly in the words of one of the more notorious ones, Cornelius Vanderbilt, “What do I care about the law? Hain’t I got the power?”). And as society’s grievances built up, populists decided to fight back. They might have taken a torch to the whole system, but they didn’t have to. Because the progressive movement was so large and incorporated elements from the two major parties, it could instead work to strengthen existing institutions with new laws and legislations to claw power back from the likes of Vanderbilt.

The same fault lines are visible today. Inequality has skyrocketed over the last three decades. A familiar statistic summarizes the trend: The richest 1 percent of Americans, who used to receive around 9 percent of national income in the 1970s, now capture more than 22 percent of it. Just like during the Gilded Age, this inequality is partly a consequence of technological changes and globalization. New technologies have automated work previously performed by low- and middle-skilled workers, damaging both their employment prospects and earnings growth. Globalization, by enabling imports from low-wage countries and facilitating the offshoring of tasks previously performed by these workers to other countries, has powerfully contributed to the same trends.

But it’s not just globalization and automation. As in the Gilded Age, people suspect that institutions have turned against them or at the very least have ignored their plight. There is no explaining the enormous riches that financiers made over the last several decades without acknowledging the helping hand of the government and its agencies—think Wall Street.

The last three decades have not just been a time of economic turmoil. They have also witnessed rapid social change and disorientation. Although many of these social changes have furthered liberty by removing deep-rooted social inequities and discrimination (against African Americans, immigrants, LGBT people, religious minorities, and women), they have also added to the insecurity and resentment of those who have seen the erosion of their privilege.

The toxic mix is completed by a sweeping collapse of trust in institutions, largely triggered by the financial crisis and its aftermath. Experts, who were empowered by their superior knowledge and claims that they could skillfully manage the economy, were seen to be at first powerless and later highly compromised in their willingness to support bankers while letting regular citizens go under. Another populist surge was nearly inevitable.

TODAY’S POPULISM, LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR, has gotten its fair share of bad press coverage. But it, too, could have an upside. The populist instinct, even coalescing around such a flawed, opportunistic, and divisive figure as U.S. President Donald Trump, is a legitimate reaction of society to hyperpowered elites and experts, and it is perhaps a necessary corrective. To be sure, like in the 1890s, it is fused with nationalism and xenophobia, now under the banner of “Make America Great Again.” Even so, the bottom-up mobilization it represents could potentially pull the United States back from the edge if it brings together a wide range of people more bent on reforming existing institutions than undermining them.

A key difference between the progressive era and the Trump era is that this time populism started with the one step back instead of the two steps forward.

For one, that’s because the ugly side of populism is more visible today than ever before. But more importantly, it is because what ultimately led to successful change during the progressive era was that the populist impulse led to the creation of a broad coalition. The tussle between this coalition and

powerful elites turned into a positive-sum affair, strengthening the mobilization of the nonelites while also building new and stronger institutions.

By contrast, the battle today appears to be a much more zero-sum game, with society fragmented and turned against itself and each side seeing the other as its mortal enemy to be destroyed for the sake of survival. Why? Trump's polarizing rhetoric, intent on weakening institutions, and exploitation of identity issues are part of the answer—but only part. He was offered ample ammunition to divide society because social and economic tensions were already high and trust in institutions had sunk to a nadir.

In this light, it should be no surprise that this one big step back has worsened fundamental problems afflicting U.S. society. Trump and the Republican Party's focus on identity issues will continue to polarize. Trade wars will further fan nationalism without bringing economic relief to those who have already seen their jobs disappear over the last three decades. Tax cuts will only exacerbate inequality and further enrich politically powerful elites. The dismantling of the federal bureaucracy will reduce rather than build the state's capacity at a time when the United States sorely needs a government capable of delivering a stronger social safety net; better education, health care, and infrastructure; more robust environmental policies; and a vision for shared prosperity.

The situation looks dire, but the two steps forward may still be possible. After all, U.S. history is replete with distasteful compromises paving the way to meaningful reforms and state actions. The Constitution, which enshrined slavery as the law of the land, nevertheless not only enabled the foundation of a new nation with aspirations to protect the liberties of some of its people but also ushered in an era of positive-sum evolution of both state and society. And the U.S. government had to appease racists, bigots, and vested interests to combat the Great Depression, but the new regulations, aid for farmers, and spending for job creation worked—they eased the fallout from the Depression and put the country on firmer footing for decades.

In each of these cases, questionable compromises allowed broad coalitions, which ultimately returned the country from the brink of collapse. The same is possible today. There are in fact many shared priorities of the two ends of the political spectrum. Both sides are intent on clawing back power from elites. Both sides want to generate shared prosperity.

Differences between the two sides are of course formidable, but there is much to learn from past successful populist movements.

Both sides agree that access to health care, higher-quality education, and better infrastructure have to be priorities.

Differences between the two sides are of course formidable, but there is much to learn from past successful populist movements here. And it isn't only the progressives we can turn to but also the civil rights movement. The leaders of that movement did not paint the struggle as zero-sum, necessitating the decimation of white elites for black empowerment. They did not call for reparations or radical redistribution that would have alienated many in the North and the South alike. They did not seek the dismantlement of U.S. institutions (even though these had been systematically used for discriminating against and repressing African Americans). They were, rather, at least willing to work with Southern politicians who had recently defended Jim Crow.

Today, too, compromises are necessary for forging an effective reform movement. Democrats for one need to formulate policies that can build bridges to their erstwhile supporters in the Midwest, who now feel abandoned by the party. Immigration is one obvious area, not because of its major economic effects (for which there is not much evidence) but because of the social discontent that it generates among many voters. The recent elections in Denmark, where the Social Democrats adopted more restrictive controls and managed to reduce the vote share of the populist Danish People's Party by more than half, show that this can work.

The activists of the civil rights movement were able to voice their plight and organize in a way that brought broad sections of society—even a former Texas senator with a questionable record on race, Lyndon Johnson—to their side, proclaiming, “We shall overcome.” If they overcame, so can we. ■

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Why Trade Wars Are Inevitable

TRUMP'S TRADE WARS AREN'T JUST ABOUT HIM OR CHINA—BUT GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMBALANCES THAT THE NEXT U.S. ADMINISTRATION WILL STILL HAVE TO ADDRESS.

BY MICHAEL PETTIS



EVEN AS U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP and Chinese President Xi Jinping announce and then cancel tariffs in a seemingly endless back-and-forth, it is a mistake to view the ongoing trade dispute as simply a spat between the two. It is not a Trump-Xi fight or even mainly a U.S.-China one.

In fact, when it comes to creating global trade imbalances, China is not the only—or even the worst—offender. Its current account surplus is no longer the world’s largest; the most recent data suggests China’s annualized surplus stands at about \$130 billion, significantly smaller than Japan’s (roughly \$180 billion) and Germany’s (roughly \$280 billion).

The real problem is that, over the past two decades, it has become increasingly difficult for the world to fix its massive trade imbalances; the very mechanisms that created them also make them harder to absorb. That is because trade surpluses and deficits are mainly the result of domestic savings surpluses and deficits, which are themselves a result of domestic income inequality. Until such inequality is substantially reversed, high-saving countries will continue to use trade as a way to pass the effects of their distortions onto other nations, such as the United States. This makes global trade conflict nearly inevitable—regardless of who sits in the Oval Office. For the United States, the only way out may be reconsidering how willing it is to absorb everyone else’s excesses.

CONTRARY TO CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, today’s trade surpluses are not the result of exceptional manufacturing efficiency or unusually hard-working and high-saving workforces. In fact, the household savings rate in Japan, the country with the world’s second-largest trade surplus, has been roughly zero for the past 15 years. Instead, in countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea, large trade surpluses were the natural consequence of policies that, in the name of competitiveness, effectively lowered citizens’ purchasing power for the benefit of the banking, business, and political elite—and the companies they controlled.

Because its imbalances are so extreme, China is the most obvious case in point. By definition, a current account surplus is equal to an excess of domestic production over domestic spending on consumption and investment. With the highest investment rate in the world, perhaps in history, China ought to be running a current account deficit. However, because China’s consumption rate is

In this globalized system, rising income inequality is both the cause and a consequence of international trade competition.

so low, the value of everything China produces still eclipses the value of everything China consumes or invests domestically. To offload the excess income, it runs a trade surplus and invests in financial assets abroad.

For a long time, observers such as Kishore Mahbubani, the former dean of the National University of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, pinned China’s low consumption rate on Asian values that supposedly prioritized hard work and saving. That explanation is wrong. It confuses household savings with national savings, and while the Chinese are indeed hard workers, so are workers everywhere. China’s extremely high national savings rate, like that of all the major surplus countries, is not driven by the thrift of ordinary households but by the fact that the country’s workers and retirees earn a disproportionately low share of national income, which diminishes their purchasing power.

In fact, during the past two decades, the share of Chinese income earned by Chinese households has been the lowest of any country in modern history. That means that Chinese workers can consume only a small share of what they produce.

The corollary is that an unusually high share of income goes to Chinese businesses and to local governments—largely a result of direct and hidden subsidies for production that are paid for by ordinary households. Beyond sluggish wage growth relative to productivity growth, these hidden subsidies include an artificially depressed exchange rate, lax environmental regulations, and, most importantly, negative real interest rates that have the effect of transferring income from household savers to subsidize the borrowing of state-owned enterprises and local governments. Rather than being spent on new goods and services, the resulting profits are invested in financial assets abroad. Trade surpluses are the inevitable consequences.

China is not unique. For different reasons, Germany has also been a model of wage suppression to the benefit of business profits. Since the Hartz labor reforms of the early 2000s, suppressed wage growth has led to rising income inequality and has boosted the relative share of business profits, both of

which automatically forced up the country's savings rate and shifted Germany from a country with a small current account deficit to the nation with the largest surplus in the world.

CHINESE AND GERMAN WORKERS' WOES may seem like primarily domestic problems, but in a globalized world, distortions in the way income is distributed in one country can be transmitted to others through trade. That matters especially to the United States, which plays a unique role in meeting the financial needs of the rest of the world.

Because the U.S. economy is the world's largest and most diversified, and supports the most flexible and best-governed financial markets in the world, it has been the natural home for individuals, businesses, and governments looking to store wealth abroad that they cannot or will not invest at home. About half of the world's excess savings tend to end up in the United States, with another quarter flowing to other economies with similarly open and sophisticated financial markets (such as the United Kingdom).

The United States, in other words, for decades has been a net importer of foreign capital, not because it needs foreign capital but rather because foreigners need somewhere to stash their savings. But inevitably that also means the United States has had to run trade deficits that have persisted for decades. From a net exporter in the 1950s and 1960s—when the United States shipped food, manufactured products, and capital to the rest of the world's major economies, whose productive capacity had been destroyed by two world wars—by the 1970s the balance had started to shift.

By then, the advanced economies had been largely rebuilt, and the world was no longer short of productive capacity. On the contrary, it now needed additional demand to absorb all the goods and services being provided by the rebuilt economies of countries like Germany and Japan. As the American consumer became key, the U.S. trade surplus, through which

it shipped savings to a world desperately short of investment, was transformed into a seemingly permanent U.S. trade deficit.

Trade theory tells us that these kinds of imbalances cannot persist indefinitely. Usually, automatic adjustments—including rising consumer prices, strengthening currencies, and soaring asset values for surplus countries and the reverse for deficit countries—eventually eliminate deficits and surpluses. The fact that certain countries have nonetheless run surpluses for decades, while others have run deficits, is evidence that the global trading system is not working as it is supposed to.

There is a cost to this failure. Surplus countries' ability to export their excess savings and production abroad sharply reduces the pressure on them to rebalance income at home. What is more, in the race for competitiveness with surplus countries, deficit countries must also allow, or even encourage, downward pressure on their own wages. In this globalized system, rising income inequality is both the cause and a consequence of international trade competition.

THE QUESTION, OF COURSE, is what a U.S. president should do. In standard economic theory, the financial inflows from the rest of the world should have added to Americans' own savings and led to higher levels of domestic investment. But with U.S. financial markets already flush with capital (offered at the lowest rates in history), and American businesses sitting on piles of unused cash, that is not what happened. Instead, overall spending outpaced production, and American savings declined. This, too, was inevitable: If foreign capital inflows do not cause investment to rise—as was clearly the case in the United States—they must cause savings to decline.

Put another way, foreign savings displaced domestic U.S. savings. This happens in countless ways. For example, foreign capital inflows can bid up the prices of stocks and real estate, making consumers feel richer and encouraging them to spend more. Local banks, responding to a glut of cash, can lower lending standards to domestic borrowers in order to increase credit. Infusions of foreign capital can cause the dollar to appreciate, which encourages spending on foreign imports at the expense of domestic production. Factories that can no longer compete can fire workers, who begin to tap into their rainy day funds or borrow. The government may expand the fiscal deficit to counter the economic slowdown.

The trade war with China has little to do with Trump's personal animosities or reelection strategy. It simply represents the most visible part of a deeper global imbalance.

Put together, these actions drive down U.S. savings. Indeed, the widespread belief that persistently low savings over the past four decades reflected spendthrift American habits turns out to have been wrong. The United States does not import capital because it has a low savings rate—it has a low savings rate because it is forced to absorb imported capital.

This was not as much of a problem several decades ago, when the U.S. economy was much larger relative to the others in its trade orbit. During the Cold War, meanwhile, there was added incentive to fill this role because it gave the country increased geopolitical leverage. However, as the size of the U.S. economy shrank relative to those of its trading partners, the cost of playing the balancer rose, and it was always only a question of time before the country would no longer be able or willing to play its traditional role.

Once the United States was unable to continue absorbing so much of the world's excess savings, the global system risked coming to a chaotic stop: Because no other country was large enough to play this role—and no country wanted to—there was no replacement. Trade conflict was inevitable. That is why the trade war with China ultimately has little to do with Trump's personal animosities or reelection strategy. It simply represents the most visible part of a much deeper global imbalance.

Today's trade war is not really a conflict between the United States and China as countries, nor is it even a broader conflict between deficit countries and surplus countries. Rather, it is a conflict between economic sectors. Bankers and owners of capital in both the surplus and the deficit countries have benefited from suppressed wages, rising profits, and increased mobility of international capital. Workers in the surplus countries paid for the imbalances in the form of lower incomes and depreciated currencies. Workers in the deficit countries paid for the imbalances in the form of higher unemployment and rising debt. Reversing inequality and other distortions in income distribution in both the surplus and the deficit countries is therefore the only durable way to end the trade war.

In the long run, future U.S. administrations will have to tackle income inequality either through tax reform or by tilting the playing field in favor of workers and the middle class—for example by reducing the costs of health and education, improving social infrastructure, raising minimum wages, or even strengthening labor unions. But before they can do that, they will have to fix the

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American role in the global imbalances by making it more difficult for foreigners to dump excess savings into U.S. financial markets. That could take many forms, but by far the most efficient would be a one-off entry tax on foreign capital inflows. Such a tax would eliminate the current account deficit by addressing it at its origin in the capital account surplus. It would have the additional benefit of forcing the cost of adjustment onto banks and financial speculators, unlike tariffs, which force the cost onto businesses and consumers.

The alternative is ugly. As the British economist John A. Hobson argued in 1902, the economic driver of European imperialism at the end of the 19th century was extreme inequality that reduced domestic spending and lowered the returns on financial assets invested at home. Europe's capitalists needed to find places to dump their excess savings and production. They did so by force, securing export markets abroad and guaranteeing returns on high-interest loans with armies and gunboats. That ended in imperialist conflict and, ultimately, war.

Less than three decades later, the cycle repeated. In the 1920s, a new wave of globalized trade and capital flows coincided with soaring income inequality and rising debt. The party came to a halt between 1929 and 1931 and was followed by a vicious trade competition that also ended in war. In each case, a conflict between economic sectors—one in which banks and the owners of capital were able to benefit at the expense of the rest—was represented as a conflict between countries. It wasn't a trade war then, and it isn't now. Only when U.S. policymakers realize as much—and get ready to tackle income inequality—will they be able to head off the worst of the consequences. ■

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The Internet Broke the News Industry —and Can Fix It, Too



**THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE JOURNALISM IS TO
MAKE READERS DIRECT PARTICIPANTS IN
MAKING, AND PAYING FOR, THE MEDIA.**

BY JIMMY WALES AND ORIT KOPEL

WHEN POLLSTERS ASK AMERICANS whether they trust the news they read, listen to, and watch, the answer is increasingly negative. This sentiment is in fact now common all over the world. Growing rates of global internet access have made countless sources of information readily available but with few checks and balances and widely varying levels of credibility. Unprecedented access to all kinds of media has not only increased competition among news providers, but it has also led to the extreme proliferation of low-quality yet plausible-looking sources of information—making it easier for political players to manipulate public opinion and to do so while denigrating established news brands.

The world's new, digital, and highly competitive media environment has created fundamental problems in the business models that journalism relies on. Print products are in terminal decline; television audiences are plummeting. Advertising around news is no longer attractive when internet giants like Google, Facebook, and Amazon offer far more effective ways to target consumers. These new financial realities have led many news organizations to adopt problematic techniques for survival: prioritizing quantity over quality and running so-called clickbait headlines. Each of these developments, combined with a lack of transparency within news organizations and the increased use of unfiltered social media platforms as news sources, contributes to a further drop in trust in the media.

The decline of news organizations may seem unstoppable. But while the internet has permanently disrupted traditional media, it also presents several ways to fix it. Social media can bring local communities back into journalism, boosting transparency, accountability, accuracy, and quality. Harnessing the reach of the internet can help neutralize bias in the news industry and fix problems relating to a lack of representation and diversity. Information providers can achieve these advances in a financially viable way—by making readers direct participants and stakeholders. To do all this, however, journalism must adapt to the era of connectivity and information.

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS CAN TODAY ACCESS INFORMATION with a few taps on a smartphone, but in many cases, they either lack the skills or the time to properly assess the reliability of that information.

Social media can bring local communities back into journalism, boosting transparency, accountability, accuracy, and quality.

Emerging platforms have enabled mere news enthusiasts—and propagandists—to compete with professional journalists on an equal footing. On these platforms, what makes a news report successful is its level of virality: The articles and videos that are most popular are the ones that attract the most immediate and radical emotional reactions, even if they contain factual errors. Current advertising-only business models rely on this fact for survival, prioritizing content that is addictive and shareable rather than reliable and important.

For all their flaws, however, social media platforms contain important solutions to declining levels of trust in the news industry. Emerging media have dramatically expanded the global audience of news consumers, and information providers should see that reach not as a problem but as an opportunity. The global online community, if properly harnessed, can increase accountability in news organizations by identifying biases and improving neutrality in reporting: Having the oversight of countless diverse online users can be beneficial.

Transparency is the bedrock of restoring public trust in the media; eliciting greater involvement among consumers will naturally lead to an increased demand for media transparency in sources of funding, involvement of advertisers, and political pressure.

Beyond a supervisory role, an important step would be to regard the online community as an active participant in the process of producing news. Given the chance, internet users can carve out a crucial role in assembling and curating accurate information. The key is to view social media users as a huge community of fact-checkers and news producers, instead of passive recipients of unreliable news.

The theory of turning readers into active resources is not merely hypothetical—it is a concept we adopted in 2017

when we founded *WikiTribune* as a news platform supported by professional journalists but controlled by an online community. Devoid of any traditional hierarchy, the organization encourages the highest levels of neutrality and transparency. *WikiTribune*'s volunteers and professional journalists will share the same editing rights: Each one of them can initiate or edit any article on the platform. Moderators emerge naturally from within the community.

Making readers active participants in the production of news can also help organizations save money. Fact-checking and editing, for example, can be delegated to communities of volunteers using the vast database of the internet. Traditional news editors may find this notion difficult to accept, but the concept comes naturally to people who have grown up using the internet. Passive consumption is no longer the dominant feature in news; we are all creators of content, and we should all get a chance to participate in how information is disseminated.

The wiki model—defined as any website that allows collaborative editing—also provides an effective solution to bias in reporting. If everyone has equal power, no one can control a narrative. Bias often comes from hierarchical news models in which senior editors can mold the news to fit their views—or those of their publishers or financial backers. Collaborative editing platforms allow and encourage an open discussion on every article by a variety of participants from different backgrounds. Any disputes over opposing narratives are constructively resolved by the community, avoiding the problems in traditional journalism.

A community-driven news product doesn't have to be restricted to English. Most new internet users read Hindi, Bengali, Arabic, or Chinese; Wikipedia, for example, allows users of any language to document their news and events on its online encyclopedia, and it does so despite local government restrictions on journalism, leading a global battle against censorship.

Business models based on the direct financial support of the public represent the most sustainable strategy for global media.

To be sure, collaborative models are not without their problems. It can be a struggle to create a thoughtful and varied community dedicated to the goal of producing high-quality news. Bad actors such as online trolls and politically motivated participants are threats requiring clear systems of identification, moderation, and removal. Constant efforts must be made to include as much variety of culture, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, geography, and political inclination to prevent biases. Creating standards and practices can take time, but the success of the worldwide Wikipedia community, which has faced similar challenges, proves that community models can provide an effective public good—with a high level of trust and engagement.

THE FIRST PRIORITY OF ANY NEWS OUTLET must be the quality and credibility of its journalistic work. Those that depend on advertising-only business models may find it hard to sustain this priority: Eventually, a push for more traffic, and therefore revenue, will conflict with the mission for high-quality and reliable journalism.

WikiTribune launched with a business model driven by voluntary subscriptions to avoid the need for advertising revenue and steer clear of shady corporate interests. Users who find its content meaningful and important are welcome to support the project with a one-time contribution or a monthly subscription. A successful fundraising campaign revealed a public thirst for new models of journalism. (*WikiTribune*'s model limits professional journalists to a supportive role in shaping the news—not a leading one. A volunteer community essentially takes the role of the editor, using the professional experience of the journalists to complete gaps in their news coverage.)

Business models based on the direct financial support of the public represent the most sustainable strategy for global media. Wikipedia, again, is fully supported by millions of users who appreciate the added value that the online encyclopedia brings to their lives every day. Public support comes in the form of not just money but also the time spent by volunteers contributing content and fixing errors.

Some traditional media are actively moving away from strategies dependent on online traffic and advertising. In the United Kingdom,

for example, the *Guardian* has made a successful transition to a business model based on financial contributions from readers. In 2016, after suffering tens of millions of dollars in losses, the *Guardian* appealed directly to its readers for support: Instead of calling for transactional subscriptions, it asked for patronage and participation. This humble, transparent strategy encouraged readers to support the *Guardian* for the greater cause of sustaining high-quality journalism, rather than merely treating their monthly contributions as a detached move to purchase content. By May 2019, the *Guardian* reported an annual operating profit of more than \$1 million. And its success will likely be sustainable, since it now has more than 655,000 regular monthly supporters. The transition from a membership-driven business to one based on voluntary support echoes the Wikipedia model, where users choose to support a project not necessarily for the content that they personally use but for its greater benefit to the world.

The Dutch publication *De Correspondent* presents another successful example of journalism funded by readers. Launched in Amsterdam in 2013 after its founders raised \$1.7 million from 19,000 supporters, *De Correspondent* sought to provide ethical journalism without relying on advertising, which appealed to people who wished to support a more transparent business model of news. Today, *De Correspondent* enjoys the support of more than 60,000 members—yet more evidence that there is in fact a public appetite to fund high-quality sources of information.

New funding models are critical in order to keep journalism strong, independent, and sustainable. Not all news organizations may be able or willing to adopt a patronage model. However, the more models that successfully coexist, the higher the chances that journalism will remain independent. Subscription models—as opposed to voluntary contributions—tend to be better suited to financial or other niche publications, such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Information*, because they offer a more transactional service with access to time-sensitive business news. Those somewhat customized services are made available only to those who are willing to pay premium fees for a business advantage. General news services, however, are more widely available and as such do not lend

New funding models are critical in order to keep journalism strong, independent, and sustainable.

themselves as clearly to transactional revenue models (unless they achieve the scale of a marquee newspaper like the *New York Times*).

A voluntary funding model can succeed because serious people value good journalism not for narrow reasons of personal advantage but for its impact on society as a valuable pillar of democracy.

WIKI-STYLE EDITORIAL STRUCTURES AND FINANCIAL MODELS reliant on voluntary support are admittedly radical strategies, and not all news outlets will take the risk of adopting them. But even so, fundamental lessons can be adopted from *WikiTribune* to help restore the public's trust in journalism. The most important of these is the need for transparency. The more readers feel like active participants in the process of journalism, the more they will trust the final product. And especially in smaller communities, if citizens participate in curating information, they will reduce the cost of production, thereby allowing struggling local media to survive.

Strong and independent journalism is at the heart of any healthy, functioning democracy. It is the gatekeeper against corruption and plays a vital role in communicating the facts that allow people to make informed decisions about their lives. Statements by politicians delegitimizing the media resonate with the public only if they are already in doubt of its validity. Quality journalism that involves the news community in the process of producing it creates a transparent operation that can gain the public's trust. This kind of collaborative, responsive media has a greater likelihood of attracting the direct support of people who believe in the importance of sustaining it. To save itself, journalism now needs to go back to the people. ■

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America Doesn't Need a Grand Strategy

PUNDITS AND POLITICIANS LIKE UNIFIED THEORIES TO EXPLAIN ALL OF THE WORLD'S TROUBLES—AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM. HERE'S WHY THAT APPROACH ONLY CAUSES MORE PROBLEMS.

BY **MICHAEL H. FUCHS**

IN 2014, AS SYRIA FELL APART AND RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE, criticism of U.S. President Barack Obama's foreign policy mounted. Perhaps frustrated by questions about why he wasn't solving these complex problems, the president and his advisors summarized the administration's foreign policy as "don't do stupid stuff." The phrase took on a life of its own and became the subject of derision for those claiming Obama did not have a coherent foreign policy. The *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman suggested that this was the "Obama doctrine."

Unsatisfying as Obama's explanation may have been, the sentiment wasn't wrong. Ever since the U.S. strategy of containment was thought to have won the Cold War, the United States has searched, mostly in vain, for a new grand strategy. The gravitational pull for policymakers and experts to develop an overarching vision for America's role in the world—encouraged by high-level officials and congressional

mandates—is strong and can be an important process that establishes policy priorities for the bureaucracy, sends signals to friends and foes, and helps evaluate assumptions and refine goals.

But that search can also be a misguided and dangerous exercise, forcing simplifications of a complicated world and justifying counterproductive policies. Attempts at grand strategy can become nationalistic rallying cries—like "America First" or "the global war on terrorism"—that do far more harm than good.

Today, the United States doesn't need a grand strategy. Instead, U.S. leaders need to identify their priorities and craft strategies for each of them. The foreign-policy issues that matter to the lives of Americans—from climate change to pandemic diseases to cyberattacks—increasingly require



global responses. And leaders need to convince the American people that these challenges affect them directly and that tackling them requires robust U.S. engagement in the world.

THE NOTION OF U.S. GRAND STRATEGY TODAY revolves around America's Cold War foreign policy of containment—the brainchild of the diplomat George Kennan—which sought to prevent the expansion of Moscow's influence, bolstering the strength of the noncommunist world and squeezing the Soviet Union until it changed. The objective of containment drove U.S. policy until the Soviet Union collapsed. This victory—assumed to be the result of the containment policy—created a Cold War legacy that subsequent policymakers have looked on as a heyday for Washington's global strategy.

Ever since, policymakers have searched for the holy grail of the foreign-policy field. In the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act that reorganized parts of the national security bureaucracy, Congress even required that the president submit an annual report on national security strategy.

In 1993, Anthony Lake, President Bill Clinton's national security advisor, reportedly established what he called the “Kennan sweepstakes” to encourage his staff to develop a new grand strategy. Over the years, Washington has jumped from Clinton's democratic enlargement to George W. Bush's global war on terrorism to Donald Trump's America First approach. Some strategies had more success than others, but none has captured the totality of the United States' interests. Indeed, some grand strategies are little more than messaging exercises, providing a unifying justification for a broad range of disparate policies; others elevate one or two goals above all else.

Even so, the Kennan sweepstakes still continue today in the halls of government, think tanks, and academia. In Washington, there is almost an inherent belief that the country needs a grand strategy. One cannot go long on the circuit of foreign-policy events without hearing about the

need to have a coherent foreign-policy vision. Many lament the supposedly simple days when America was guided by containment and yearn for a new term like “offshore balancing” or “preservation” that can justify and explain the United States' complex role in the world.

Beyond Washington, many Americans are confused by U.S. foreign policy. A recent poll by the Center for American Progress revealed that voters “did not see an overarching principle, rationale, or clear set of goals in U.S. foreign policy. ... Several participants wondered why the United States does not have a plan for economic and political success in the world like they perceive China and other competitors do.” This dynamic encourages leaders and experts to develop simplified talking points that can easily explain the U.S. role in the world to voters.

And while grand strategies in the form of public narratives may help convince Americans of the need for a robust U.S. role in the world, they can also justify dangerous policies. As Kennan himself once lamented about the Vietnam War, a conflict that he felt had unrealistic goals, “Our Vietnam involvement marches under the semantic banner as the containment of communism.” Perhaps leaders are better off convincing the American people that there are grave challenges that affect their lives and making the case for each policy on the merits.

After all, while having a grand strategy may instill a sense of comfort, policymaking rarely goes according to plan. Speeches and documents like the annual National Security Strategy can provide helpful signals about goals and identify priorities but rarely offer answers on how to reconcile competing interests or deal with unexpected crises.

The Arab Spring uprisings that swept across the Middle East in 2011 are a case in point. Obama was confronted with a series of revolutions that were transforming the region and Washington's role in it. Though Obama outlined principles for the U.S. response in a May 2011 speech—highlighting support for democracy while criticizing the U.S. government's history of prioritizing strategic interests—no simple set of principles could have guided a U.S. president effectively through the Arab Spring.

Syria was the most devastating of the policy dilemmas. While Obama made clear his interest in getting the United States out of conflicts in the Middle East, the Syrian catastrophe could not be

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ignored. The United States publicly supported the aspirations of the Syrian people, financed humanitarian assistance, and attempted to end the war through diplomacy. As part of these goals, Obama included a “red line”—the public threat that a chemical weapons attack would change his calculus about intervening—but his decision not to respond militarily to a chemical attack in 2013 fed a perception that the United States lacked credibility.

Yet, for all the criticism of the red-line incident, and while other policy approaches may have achieved more, neither a grand strategy focused on supporting humanitarian goals nor a realpolitik policy would have necessarily been more effective: A full-scale military intervention might have caused a protracted U.S. war or left a power vacuum in Syria; a realpolitik approach might have considered Syria not central to U.S. interests.

The South China Sea is another example of the conundrum that policymakers face in applying principles to thorny real-world situations. When it comes to the maritime disputes between China and its neighbors, the United States prioritizes norms like the freedom of navigation and maintaining peace. But in upholding freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the United States must consider its risk tolerance for a broader conflict with China: Should the United States be willing to use force to deter China from threatening its neighbors? If the United States is not willing to use force while China is, can the United States effectively uphold norms in the region?

Washington’s response to Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine presents similar problems. Upholding international law by using force to get Russia to withdraw from Ukraine—as the United States did in pushing Iraq out of Kuwait—is not feasible when confronting a nuclear-armed power.

In my time in government, I can’t think of an instance in which a policymaker dealing with a challenge pulled the National Security Strategy or a speech off the shelf for guidance (other than desk officers cutting and pasting quotes into talking points). Too often events—a crisis or an upcoming speech—spur officials to define a strategy or announce a new policy, which is then usually forgotten.

DURING TWO PERIODS SINCE WORLD WAR II, the United States has adopted grand strategies that garnered widespread domestic support and that served as lodestars for U.S. policy—containment and the

The bigger and more ideological a grand strategy gets, the more it tends to disregard the negative consequences it may be creating.

global war on terrorism. But both of those grand strategies were often counterproductive.

While the United States’ overarching foreign policy during the Cold War was successful in building up strong alliances and international institutions, aspects of the U.S. approach were disastrous. The list of criticisms is long: proxy wars from Latin America to Africa to Asia, including the Vietnam War, which took the lives of 58,000 Americans and countless Vietnamese; support for coups against democratically elected leaders and in support of dictators from Iran to Guatemala; an arms race in which the United States built tens of thousands of nuclear weapons that could destroy the world multiple times over; McCarthyism and its chilling effect on democracy at home.

There is a very strong case that many of these policies weakened Washington’s overall efforts against Moscow by eroding support for the United States around the world and draining U.S. blood and treasure. Kennan’s original notion of containment was, after all, mostly aimed at maintaining U.S. strength and waiting for the Soviet Union to collapse under the weight of its own internal weaknesses. With the Cold War lasting 40 years, who’s to say that the United States would not have won—which it eventually did because the Soviet Union dissolved due to its internal weaknesses—without fighting proxy wars, supporting anti-communist dictators, or McCarthyism?

Since the end of the Cold War, the global war on terrorism is perhaps the closest the United States has come to an overarching foreign-policy vision. The response to the 9/11 attacks has in part defined U.S. foreign policy ever since—turning the need to combat terrorism into an all-consuming global struggle and attaching it to the “freedom agenda” that promised aggressive support for imposing democracy. The United States and the world have been worse off because of it.

The Bush administration manufactured Iraqi links to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to justify an unnecessary war. The Iraq War resulted in thousands of dead American soldiers and countless dead Iraqis, strengthened Iran,

destabilized the Middle East, and arguably led directly to the creation of the Islamic State. It also used the specter of terrorism to justify torturing detainees and illegally spying on Americans.

Obama attempted to reject the use of the global war on terrorism to justify policies harmful to the United States, but he couldn't completely escape it. He ended the war in Iraq, but the rise of the Islamic State pulled him back in. He wanted to end the war in Afghanistan, but the potential for instability persuaded him to stay. Obama repeatedly attempted to place the threat of terrorism in context compared to much greater threats, but fears of terrorism continued to dominate the U.S. national security debate. Trump played on those fears by falsely linking refugees and immigrants to a terrorist threat.

Two former senior U.S. government officials, Jon Finer and Robert Malley, outlined why the global war on terrorism has been counterproductive: "The intense pressure to immediately address terrorist threats leads to a focus on symptoms over causes and to an at times counterproductive reliance on the use of force. ... Sometimes what's needed is a far broader approach that would entail ... addressing factors such as a lack of education or employment opportunities, ethnic or religious discrimination, the absence of state services, and local government repression." Despite chances of dying at the hands of a foreign-born terrorist being smaller than chances of dying from an animal attack, terrorism continues to dominate U.S. national security policymaking.

Even if pursuing a grand strategy were preferable, there are two other practical challenges to implementing it effectively: a changing world and changing U.S. leadership.

America's first post-Cold War strategy unleashed a fierce backlash as the geopolitical winds shifted. Republican President George H.W. Bush and Clinton, a Democrat, pursued a foreign policy aimed at extending what were believed to be some of the winning pillars of the Cold War strategy—democracy and markets—by supporting European unity and democratization in Russia, expanding free trade deals, and bringing China further into the global community.

Trump's America First approach is a grand strategy of sorts—and when it drives U.S. policy, it inflicts significant damage.

Today, however, many would argue that this strategy sowed the seeds of future challenges: an aggressive, autocratic Russia angry at a failed democratic transition and an expanded NATO; a rising authoritarian China; and growing inequality and populism resulting in part from free trade. The bigger and more ideological a grand strategy gets, the more it tends to disregard the negative consequences it may be creating.

Similarly, presidential transitions make it nearly impossible to pursue a consistent grand strategy. Obama once called the presidency a "relay race" in which progress needs to be passed on to a successor, and recent experience shows just how essential a smooth handoff is. The post-Cold War strategy pursued by the older Bush and Clinton was overturned by the foreign policy of the younger Bush the day after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. And just two and a half years after Obama left office, Trump has already dismantled many of his greatest foreign-policy accomplishments, such as the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement.

If having a grand strategy is undesirable, some argue, then there is a kernel of pragmatism in Trump's erratic "foreign policy by tweet" approach. Trump might be wary of formal strategies (and even predictable behavior), but that does not mean he doesn't have a vision of the world.

After all, despite wildly unpredictable policies and implementation, Trump has had some foreign-policy north stars for decades. He believes in zero-sum international politics, particularly on trade. He believes the United States does not benefit from the international rules and norms of the post-World War II order. He believes the United States should be an ethnonationalist state. And he believes that allies take advantage of the United States while strongmen make good partners.

Trump's America First approach is a grand strategy of sorts—and when it drives U.S. policy, it inflicts significant damage. It has justified racist policies including the Muslim travel ban and massive decreases in refugee acceptance. It has resulted in tariffs that harm Americans' livelihoods. And it has driven Trump to abandon support for human rights and praise authoritarians from Russian President Vladimir Putin to Chinese President Xi Jinping while criticizing Washington's closest democratic allies.

But Trump's policies do not have widespread support within the U.S. government or with the American public; they also differ from his

administration's supposed grand strategy on paper, leading to outright contradictory policies. Indeed, large parts of Trump's own National Security Strategy appear to be divorced from his day-to-day policies. The strategy prioritizes great-power competition with Russia, but Trump seems hard-pressed to say a critical word of Putin. Trump's administration pursued a "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign against North Korea, and then the president agreed to a summit with Kim Jong Un without even consulting his advisors.

Trump's inability to coherently pursue a grand strategy is a good thing. His policies are disastrous, and if they had broader institutional support across the federal government and with the American people, it is hard to overstate how devastating they would be.

GRAND STRATEGIES HAVE THEIR USES. They can help clarify priorities in a complex world and can foster stability by signaling U.S. intentions to allies and adversaries. When America leads the way, it can produce transformative breakthroughs—brokering peace between Israel and Jordan and Egypt; supporting a united Europe during and after the Cold War; ending the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo; the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement.

But the United States doesn't need to articulate a grand strategy in order to achieve its most important goals—it needs to focus on priorities that may not necessarily weave together in a convincing narrative. Today, the United States needs a strategy for preventing and responding to climate change. It needs a strategy for stopping Russian interference in U.S. politics. It needs a strategy for preventing China from gaining military hegemony in East Asia. And it needs to ensure that its budget reflects these disparate and sometimes unrelated priorities.

Below the level of grand strategy, U.S. policymakers should grapple with the big questions of principle that can inform policy. When should the United States be willing to use military force beyond cases of self-defense? Does the United States believe that a hegemonic power dominating East Asia is unacceptable?

The threat from China requires serious, concrete policies, but the growing instinct to treat China like a new Cold War competitor holds great peril. Making China the focus of a new grand strategy risks infusing U.S. policy with racism and fear that could blur Washington's ability to create effective policies. While the United States must address national

The United States doesn't need to articulate a grand strategy in order to achieve its most important goals.

security concerns about China exporting its surveillance state, strong-arming allies to not use Chinese telecommunications equipment, such as that made by Huawei, could damage critical alliances. While Washington must counter efforts by Chinese security services to conduct influence operations in the United States, the growing calls for curbing the ability of Chinese citizens to visit the United States could be counterproductive.

In the process of building up a genuine threat into the target of a new Cold War, the slippery slope into a new era of McCarthyism is not difficult to imagine. The United States needs numerous strategies toward China—dealing with its economic espionage and its aggression in maritime Asia, for instance—but those strategies do not need to form an overall grand strategy that subsumes other crucial priorities.

Indeed, Washington can reassure partners and allies abroad about its goals and values without a grand strategy. Avoiding grand visions, in fact, might help the United States bridge what the political scientist Samuel Huntington referred to as the "Lippmann gap," named for Walter Lippmann, who believed the gap between America's stated goals and its capacity to deliver on them led the country to adopt dangerous policies. It is important for the United States to articulate bold and aspirational goals, but as the Syria red-line incident made clear, a large gap between stated U.S. policies and Washington's willingness to back them up can create serious problems.

Today, no single strategy will define the whole of the United States' purpose in the world. Policymakers should not submit to the false comforts of simplistic goals or ideological missions. They should embrace the complexity of U.S. interests in the world and dive headfirst into solving specific challenges like climate change and not worry about whether there is a convincing narrative to explain it all. ■

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PEACEGAME: VENEZUELA

PeaceGame: Venezuela convened global leaders in Washington, DC, on October 2 to think through the potential for worsening security and humanitarian scenarios in Venezuela and explore ways to respond effectively. This high-level crisis simulation was produced by *Foreign Policy* in partnership with the Atlantic Council and Florida International University, with support from PeaceGame founding partner, the United Arab Emirates.



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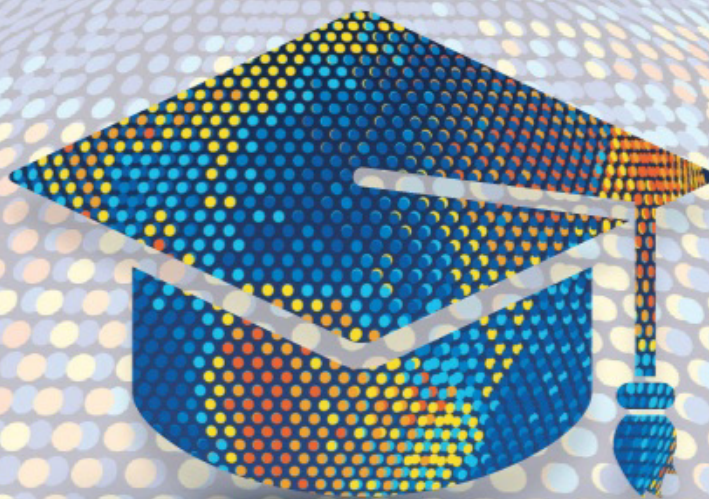
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FP PEACEGAME

Over the last decade, FP Analytics' custom simulations have tackled some of the world's most intractable problems. Our solutions-oriented approach forces participants to think more creatively about how stakeholders can best manage crises and mitigate their impacts. Dialogues convene leaders across government, business, academia, and civil society to work through scenarios that facilitate strategic thinking and collaboration.

To learn more, contact Diana Marrero at diana.marrero@foreignpolicy.com or Susan Sadigova at susan.sadigova@foreignpolicy.com.



APPLYING TO GRAD SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



6 WAYS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR APPLICATIONS

TIPS FROM ADMISSIONS EXPERTS AT LEADING SCHOOLS

Successful applicants to international affairs graduate programs follow the guidelines below, recommended by admissions directors and other experts at leading schools in this FP Guide. Requirements and strategies vary from school to school, as detailed on the pages that follow. Some of this advice, however, may apply more generally:

- 1** Consider working for a few years before graduate study. While work experience is not always required for acceptance, schools consider it a bonus, both as an indicator of a student's motivation for further study and as a way to gain appreciation for the classroom experience.
- 2** Actively interact with the school community before applying. This can be accomplished through information sessions, open houses, webinars, and online workshops.
- 3** Present a compelling rationale for why you want to attend a particular program, how the degree will fit into your career plan—and how you will contribute to the program.
- 4** Display intellectual honesty in your personal statement. Schools look for applicants who know their shortcomings and demonstrate an ability to compensate for them.
- 5** Prepare for standardized exams (the GRE or GMAT, plus the TOEFL or IELTS for international applicants). If an exam is not required, focus on shaping the different qualitative pieces of your application into a portfolio that tells a story about you.
- 6** Think carefully about recommendation letters. The most effective are those that add depth and distinctive detail, rather than repeating information that can be gleaned from a transcript or résumé.

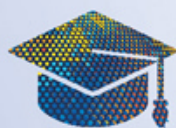
Johns Hopkins University

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (SAIS)

“Learning beyond the classroom is a hallmark of the Johns Hopkins SAIS experience. Through study trips, practicum projects, summer internships and extracurricular activities, students are encouraged to apply what they have learned in the classroom to address complex, real-world scenarios.”



–Sidney T. Jackson,
Assistant Dean of
Global Enrollment and
Recruitment, Johns
Hopkins University
School of Advanced
International Studies
(SAIS)



Graduate Degree Program Options

- Master of Arts (MA)
- MA in International Affairs
- MA in International Studies
- MA in Global Risk
- MA in International Economics and Finance
- MA in Global Policy (for experienced professionals)
- Master of International Public Policy (for experienced professionals)
- MA in European Public Policy (pending endorsement by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC))
- Doctor of International Affairs (for experienced professionals)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Also, dual and cooperative degree programs with partner institutions

Successful applicants to Johns Hopkins’ School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) bring valuable experience and a collaborative spirit to the program. In return, the school offers diverse degree and course options, instruction from influential thought leaders, an impressive alumni network—and the chance to study internationally.

“Learning beyond the classroom is a hallmark of the Johns Hopkins SAIS experience,” says Sidney T. Jackson, assistant dean of global enrollment and recruitment. “Through study trips, practicum projects, summer internships, and extracurricular activities, students are encouraged to apply what they have learned in the classroom to address complex, real-world scenarios.”

For example, students in the Energy, Resources, and Environment program completed a practicum with global reinsurance provider Swiss Re to analyze the economic consequences of climate-related disasters in agriculture-dependent communities. The outcome: the students proposed solutions to protect the financial stability of farms after crop loss and to lessen the financial burden on the public sector.

In addition to the opportunity to study at our campus locations in Washington, DC, Europe, and China, students can gain hands-on, global experience through study trips, consulting projects, summer internships, and career treks. A career trek allows students to visit companies and attend networking receptions to meet some of the school’s 20,000 accomplished alumni. The school hosts between 20 and 30 career treks a year around the world, to help students learn about career paths in a range of industries—from asset management to political risk to think tanks. One recent example was an energy career trek to Houston and Austin, Texas, to explore careers in the oil-and-gas and renewable-energy sectors.

A new program this year, the Doctor of International Affairs, fills a gap in higher education: an advanced research degree for those who want to pursue a practitioner role rather than an academic one.

The school also recently added faculty in areas of strategic importance, such as global health and development, cybersecurity, energy and sustainability, human rights, and migration, to grow its program offerings and ensure that its graduates are well positioned to lead the response to vital global challenges, Jackson says.

The admissions committee views previous work experience as a way to measure motivation and to ensure an engaging classroom experience. The committee also considers previous academic performance; international exposure from having worked, studied, volunteered, or traveled in other countries; career aspirations; and overall fit with the school’s community.

Candidates should submit at least two letters of recommendation that address their interpersonal and communication skills, character, maturity, aptitude for leadership, and ability to succeed in a competitive graduate school environment. For candidates who are employed, the committee prefers that at least one recommendation come from an immediate supervisor.

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Early Notification: November 1, 2019

Regular Decision: Varies by program (<https://sais.jhu.edu/admissions>)

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT optional for most degree programs. TOEFL or IELTS required for non-native English speakers.

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist: <https://sais.jhu.edu/admissions>

Study with Purpose

The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) develops leaders who seek a deeper understanding of how politics, economics, and international relations drive global change.

Attend an upcoming on-campus or virtual information session to learn more about our degree programs for experienced professionals.

sais.jhu.edu



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UC San Diego SCHOOL OF GLOBAL POLICY AND STRATEGY (GPS)

“The value that work experience brings to the application is the perspective it gives an applicant on the purpose of graduate studies.”



—Sonja Steinbrech,
Director of Admissions,
School of Global
Policy and Strategy,
UC San Diego

UC San Diego’s School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) has become the policy hub for a campus known for its work in science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM.

GPS is increasingly hiring STEM faculty, and its programs emphasize rigorous, data-driven analytics based in economics, advanced statistics, and related fields, taking a systematic approach to program design and evaluation—whether in human rights, sustainable energy, or other areas. So, in addition to seeking students with more traditional educational or professional backgrounds related to international affairs, the school welcomes students with undergraduate STEM degrees who are pivoting toward policy and international work.

About half of the degree-seeking students at GPS come from outside the United States, offering unique opportunities for interaction and mutual learning experiences with other students as well as faculty. The school attracts many students from the diverse state of California, as well as applicants with significant experience working in Washington, DC, or other world capitals.

“The value that work experience brings to the application is the perspective it gives an applicant on the purpose of graduate studies,” says Director of Admissions Sonja Steinbrech. There’s no minimum work experience requirement for the two-year master’s degree programs, but “professional work allows a focus and an appreciation for the classroom experience that is hard to gain otherwise,” Steinbrech says.

Candidates for the two-year master’s programs have a wide range of work experiences, from serving in the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps to working for private companies, government, or the military in the United States or abroad.

The school’s executive degree program, the Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs, requires five years of full-time professional experience, though students in the program have worked an average of 10 years in government, military, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector.

Successful applicants to GPS, which celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, have a passion for international affairs, an open mind, and innate curiosity.

“They are ready to take a deep dive into quantitative-methods training, while at the same time exploring the breadth of contemporary challenges in policy implementation,” Steinbrech says.

Candidates submit either GRE or GMAT scores for the two-year programs, and the admissions committee evaluates those scores in conjunction with their academic records and a series of subjective factors. The Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs does not require an entrance exam.

Three letters of recommendation are required, including at least one that addresses the prospective student’s performance in the classroom and suitability for the planned course of study, and two others from someone, especially a supervisor, who knows the applicant well.



Graduate Degree Program Options

- Master of International Affairs (MIA)
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Master of Chinese Economic and Political Affairs (MCEPA)
- Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA)
- PhD joint program, International Relations and Political Science

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 15, 2020, for master’s programs; December 10, 2019, for PhD joint program

Financial Aid: January 15, 2020

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE or GMAT required (except for MAS-IA program)

Recommendation Letters: Three required

Application Checklist: <https://gps.ucsd.edu/admissions/applying.html>



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gps.ucsd.edu

UC San Diego

American University SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (SIS)

“We ask our applicants to truly focus on the qualitative elements of their application and think of it as a portfolio versus a collection of disparate parts—how do the different pieces come together to tell a story, and what is the research identity you wish the committee to discern from the story?”



—Jia Jiang, Director of Graduate Enrollment Management, School of International Service, American University



As a master’s student in international development, Dilanthi Ranaweera dreamed of a job helping rural, low-income farmers attain health care, education, and better technology. “The seeds of that dream were planted” at the American University School of International Service (SIS), says Ranaweera, MA 2015, now part of the field operations team at One Acre Fund, a nonprofit that works with farmers in Africa to increase productivity and combat poverty.

Ranaweera was drawn to the learning environment at SIS, a human-centered institution founded in response to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s call to prepare students of international affairs to “wage peace.” The core of SIS’s mission is to be of service and to create a positive impact on the global community.

“We understand *service* to be a mind-set and not just a moment,” says Jia Jiang, director of graduate enrollment management at SIS. “People who come here often find some common ground in their core values and help enhance a collaborative learning culture that advances our commitment to service.”

Jiang notes that applicants can learn about programs at SIS—“where Washington, DC, is our campus”—through information sessions, open houses, webinars, online workshops, and more.

Many of the school’s successful applicants interact with the SIS community before applying, Jiang says. This allows the prospective students to understand the school’s learning expectations, program offerings, opportunities to be involved in research led by scholar-practitioners, and ways to pursue their unique interests within the school’s curriculum.

Because the GRE is no longer required for an SIS master’s degree application, Jiang says, “we ask our applicants to truly focus on the qualitative elements of their application, and think of it as a portfolio versus a collection of disparate parts—how do the different pieces come together to tell a story, and what is the research identity you wish the committee to discern from the story?”

Students come to SIS working toward their individual ideas of service—some through social justice and poverty alleviation, others through people-to-people educational and cultural exchange, and still others through global governance and security or foreign policy. Competitive applicants share a strong academic background, multiple indicators for academic and cocurricular success, a clear sense of focus for their graduate education, and a compelling rationale for why they have applied to a particular program.

About 75 percent of SIS master’s degree students have a broad range of post-collegiate work experience. Work that is relevant to an applicant’s intended area of study usually enhances the application, but many students bring professional perspectives from a related field that complement what they want to study.

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and matching program for the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award.

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 15, 2020 (priority deadline for master’s); December 15, 2019 (final deadline for PhD)

Financial Aid: January 15, 2020

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE required for PhD application but not required for master’s; TOEFL/IELTS/PTE required for international students, if applicable

Recommendation Letters: Two required for master’s degree applications; three required for PhD applications

Application Checklist: <https://www.american.edu/sis/admissions/required-materials.cfm>

More Information: <https://www.american.edu/sis/admissions>

Graduate Degree Program Options

- MA in Comparative and Regional Studies
- MS in Development Management
- MA in Ethics, Peace, and Human Rights
- MA in Global Environmental Policy
- MA in Global Governance, Politics, and Security
- MA in Intercultural and International Communication
- MA in International Affairs Policy and Analysis
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Economic Relations
- MA in International Economics
- MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution
- MA in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development
- MA in US Foreign Policy and National Security
- MA in International Relations (online)
- MS in International Relations and Business (online)
- Executive Master of International Service (on campus or online)
- PhD in International Relations

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS | TRANSNATIONAL SECURITY
TRADE POLICY | POLITICAL VIOLENCE
PEACE BUILDING | NATIONAL SECURITY | DIPLOMACY
SOCIAL ISSUES | TECHNOLOGY
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS | REGIONAL SECURITY & STABILITY
CLIMATE CHANGE | GLOBAL INEQUALITY
MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
POLITICAL ECONOMY | EUROPE & EURASIA
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY | INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
THE MIDDLE EAST | WORLD ORDER
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE | SOUTHEAST ASIAN POLITICS
NATIONALISM | TRADE RELATIONS
FOOD & AGRICULTURE | RECONCILIATION & JUSTICE
ETHICS, PEACE & HUMAN RIGHTS
FIELD EXPERIENCE | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT | POLITICAL THOUGHT

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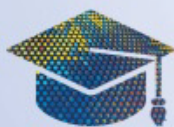
Learn more at
www.american.edu/sis

University of Denver JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

"We are a top-rated school of international affairs that is outside the Washington Beltway. Being here in Denver allows students and faculty to engage with those issues in a different capacity. We are able to challenge thinking, offer a fresh perspective, and come up with new ideas."



–Brittani McClendon,
Associate Director of
Graduate Enrollment,
Josef Korbel School of
International Studies,
University of Denver



Five overarching global issues—inclusive economic growth, security, social justice, sustainability, and democracy—provide the structural underpinnings of the curriculum for incoming graduate students at the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies.

"If you care about these issues, if you want to have impact in these areas, then we're the school where you should be studying," says Brittani McClendon, associate director of graduate enrollment. "In practice, what that looks like is that we offer graduate degrees and certificate programs that fall into these issues."

Sustainability, for example, refers to environmental issues but also to the need for good governance to achieve lasting stability, McClendon says. Related coursework might cover climate change, inclusivity of government policies, or "future modeling" to test various scenarios and possible solutions.

"With the arrival of our new dean, Frederick 'Fritz' Mayer, the school is ready to take on the great challenges of our time," says McClendon. "We are working to find ways to make the global economy more equitable and inclusive, respond to new and emerging security threats, advance human rights and social justice, combat climate change, and promote healthy democracy through our research, curriculum, and community involvement."

The focus on the five issues is a new element at the school this year, as is a revised standard for admissions and scholarship consideration that makes the GRE optional.

"Historically, some of the best applicants have not necessarily been those with the highest test scores, but those who knew their shortcomings and demonstrated an ability to compensate for them," McClendon says. "We look closely at the personal statement for signs of intellectual honesty and self-awareness."

For the two required letters of recommendation, the most effective are those that add depth and distinctive detail, rather than repeating information that can be gleaned from an applicant's transcript or résumé.

Work experience is not a requirement for admission, though relevant experience in public policy or international affairs can provide a leg up for scholarships. Applicants typically do have some experience working, volunteering, or studying outside their home countries.

To translate studies into practice, students have access to more than 40 active research projects and 13 centers or institutes. In September 2018, the school received a \$14 million gift to invest in faculty, scholarships, and programs that advance interdisciplinary public policy solutions through the university's Scrivner Institute of Public Policy, newly renamed after the donors.

The Josef Korbel School's location away from the US East and West coasts offers a unique and valuable perspective, McClendon says.

"We are a top-rated school of international affairs that is outside the Washington Beltway," McClendon notes. "Being here in Denver allows students and faculty to engage with those issues in a different capacity. We are able to challenge thinking, offer a fresh perspective, and come up with new ideas."

Graduate Degree Program Options

- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Human Rights
- MA in International Security
- MA in International Studies
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Dual degrees, including MA and MSW, MPP and MSW, MPP and JD, and flexible options
- PhD in International Studies

MA students may also select from seven certificate programs to further tailor their studies.

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: January 8, 2020 (priority deadline)

Scholarships: January 8, 2020 (priority deadline)

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE optional

Recommendation Letters: Two required

Application Checklist: <https://korbel.du.edu/admission-aid>



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JOSEF KORBEL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

“I bridged religion & democracy
in the Middle East.”

your turn.

— Nader Hashemi *Professor*

du.edu/korbel

University of Notre Dame

KEOUGH SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS

"The Keough School is committed to diversity and strives to create a student body that includes students of all international, linguistic, socioeconomic, and disciplinary backgrounds."



–Becca Méndez,
Associate Director
of the Master of
Global Affairs
program, Keough
School of Global
Affairs, University
of Notre Dame



Graduate Degree Program Options

- Master of Global Affairs (MGA)
- MGA/JD
- MGA/MBA

Deadlines for Fall 2020

Application: December 15, 2019

Financial Aid/Scholarships: December 15, 2019

The University of Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs operates under the principle that no single discipline can practice its methods in isolation, and therefore it is committed to addressing global problems from many different perspectives—and with a sensitivity to the cultures, religions, and histories of the communities it engages.

Accordingly, the Keough School's growing list of classes for its Master of Global Affairs (MGA) program allows students to reach across disciplines in their studies, equipping them with a toolbox of integrated skills to use in their professional pursuits.

The school's curriculum focuses on the intersection of theory and practice, so students must be able to take academic theories taught in the classroom and weigh them against their own experiences. Therefore, the MGA program requires that applicants have at least two years of previous work or volunteer experience.

It is also important that students identify with the Keough School's mission of integral human development—the flourishing of whole communities and the whole person.

"Through the Keough School, Notre Dame will prepare students for effective and ethically grounded professional leadership in government, the private sector, and global civil society, engaging them in the worldwide effort to address the greatest challenges of our century: threats to security and human dignity that come in the form of crushing poverty and underdevelopment, failed governance and corruption, resource wars, civil wars, and other forms of political violence and human rights violations," said Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., president of the university when the new school was announced in 2014. (At the time, the Keough School was the first new college or school at Notre Dame since 1921; it welcomed its first class of students in 2017.)

Successful MGA candidates should have a strong work ethic and international or cross-cultural experience that made a positive impact. They should be proficient in English as well as another language. Applications also should demonstrate how the MGA degree will fit into their overall career plans.

This year, the school is launching a two-year professional development and career-planning program that will guide students from orientation to graduation. The program will provide students with career-planning experience, as well as vital practice in job-search skills such as résumé building, networking, and interviewing.

Students choose among three concentrations: Sustainable Development, International Peace Studies, or Global Affairs + Specialization.

Students get practical experience working with global partners on issues such as public health, displacement and migration, and peace building. Last summer, students fanned out to 18 countries for fieldwork such as improving the housing markets in India and Mexico, promoting gender equality in Cambodia and Timor-Leste, and enhancing school performance and innovation in Chile.

Standardized Exam Scores: GRE is required. International Peace Studies students are not required to take the GRE before submitting their application, but they are required to take the exam during their course of study. TOEFL or IELTS scores are required for non-native English speakers, unless they have completed two years of study at a university where courses are taught in English.

Recommendation Letters: Three required—at least one that addresses academic ability and one that speaks to professional capabilities. Letters that attest to an applicant's character are also valued.

Application Checklist: <https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/apply>



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GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) <https://sais.jhu.edu>

- Master of Arts (MA)
- MA in International Affairs
- MA in International Studies
- MA in Global Risk
- MA in International Economics and Finance
- MA in Global Policy (for experienced professionals)
- Master of International Public Policy (for experienced professionals)
- MA in European Public Policy (pending endorsement by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC))
- Doctor of International Affairs (for experienced professionals)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Also, dual and cooperative degree programs with partner institutions

UC San Diego, School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) <https://gps.ucsd.edu>

- Master of International Affairs (MIA)
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Master of Chinese Economic and Political Affairs (MCEPA)
- Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA)
- PhD joint program, International Relations and Political Science

American University, School of International Service (SIS) www.american.edu/sis

- MA in Comparative and Regional Studies
- MS in Development Management
- MA in Ethics, Peace, and Human Rights
- MA in Global Environmental Policy
- MA in Global Governance, Politics, and Security
- MA in Intercultural and International Communication
- MA in International Affairs Policy and Analysis
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Economic Relations
- MA in International Economics
- MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution
- MA in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development
- MA in US Foreign Policy and National Security
- MA in International Relations (online)
- MS in International Relations and Business (online)
- Executive Master of International Service (on campus or online)
- PhD in International Relations

Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and matching program for the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award.

University of Denver, Josef Korbel School of International Studies www.du.edu/korbel

- MA in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration
- MA in International Development
- MA in International Human Rights
- MA in International Security
- MA in International Studies
- Master of Public Policy (MPP)
- Dual degrees, including MA and MSW, MPP and MSW, MPP and JD, and flexible options
- PhD in International Studies

MA students may also select from seven certificate programs to further tailor their studies. Participates in the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

University of Notre Dame, Keough School of Global Affairs <https://keough.nd.edu>

- Master of Global Affairs (MGA)
- MGA/JD
- MGA/MBA

See these schools and more at <https://fpguide.foreignpolicy.com/2019-apply-grad>

- University of Kent, Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS)
- University of Kentucky, Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce
- The New School, Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs
- Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service
- Sciences Po, Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA)

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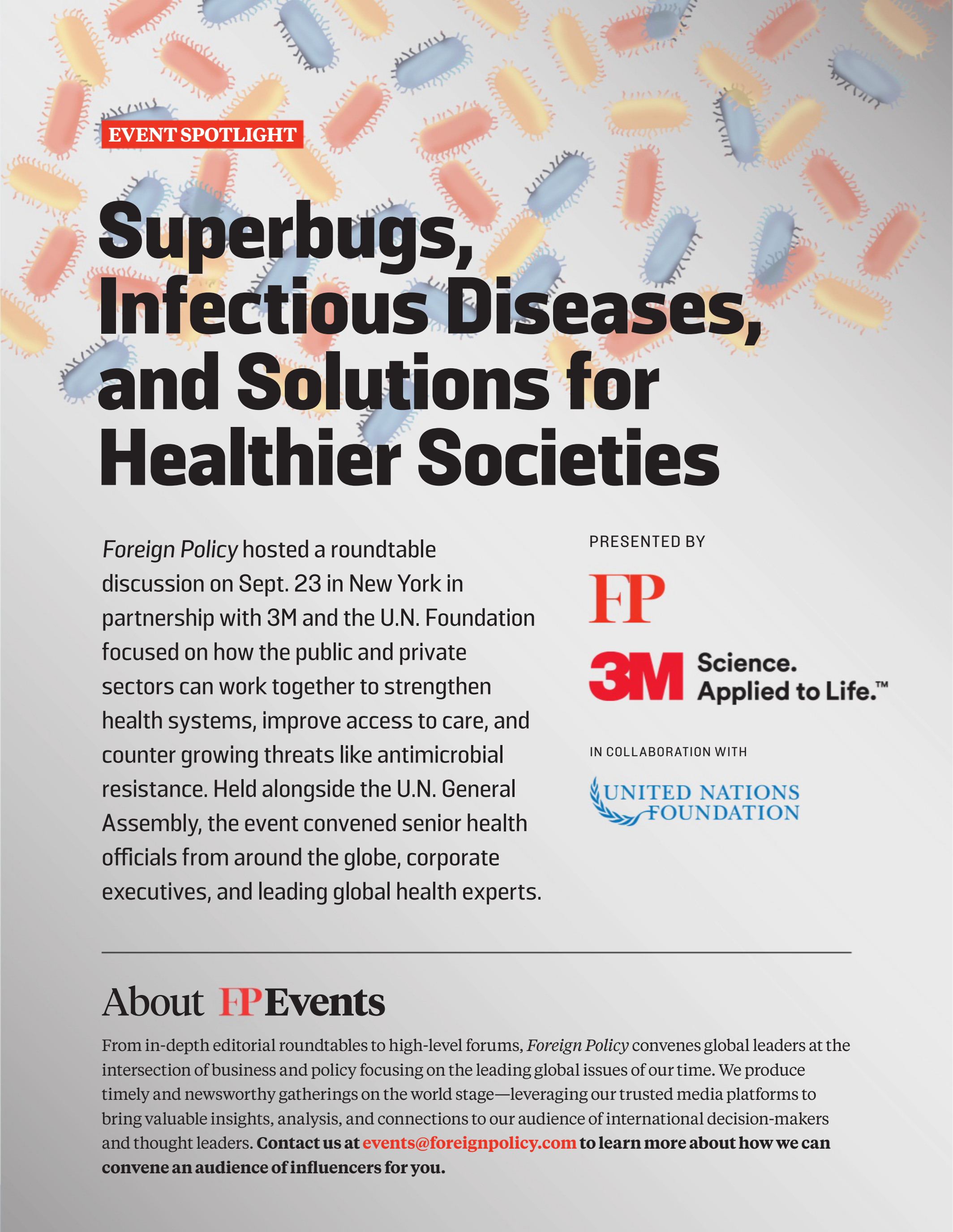
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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Superbugs, Infectious Diseases, and Solutions for Healthier Societies

Foreign Policy hosted a roundtable discussion on Sept. 23 in New York in partnership with 3M and the U.N. Foundation focused on how the public and private sectors can work together to strengthen health systems, improve access to care, and counter growing threats like antimicrobial resistance. Held alongside the U.N. General Assembly, the event convened senior health officials from around the globe, corporate executives, and leading global health experts.

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reviews



The Great Indian Streaming Wars

The battle over the country's future is being waged one TV screen—and smartphone—at a time. *By Ravi Agrawal*

DISCLAIMERS AT THE START OF MOVIES OR TELEVISION SHOWS are fairly common, but the one that leads season 2 of the Netflix detective series *Sacred Games* is particularly exhaustive: “Resemblance of any character of this series to any persons, places, real events, linguistic groups, political parties, communities, religions or sects is purely coincidental and unintentional.” It could have added that viewers should lighten up. In 2018, an Indian politician filed a complaint to the police because a character in the show’s first season, while

narrating a period of India’s history, called former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi the Hindi word *fattu*—translated in subtitles as “pussy.”

Netflix’s legalese may yet prove useful: On Sept. 3, another politician filed a police complaint against the streaming service for “defaming Hindus.” The fictional characters and

NETFLIX/AMAZON

circumstances depicted in *Sacred Games* do seem familiar in modern-day India. Based on the eponymous 2006 novel by Vikram Chandra, the series follows a Mumbai police officer named Sartaj Singh—played ably by the Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan—who is attempting to save his city from an imminent terrorist attack. The latest season, released on Aug. 15, India's Independence Day, picks up from last year's cliffhanger finale and reveals that a group of anarchists has acquired a nuclear bomb and plans to blow up the country's financial capital.

While both seasons of *Sacred Games* race along, time seems to stop every time the complicated and amusingly foul-mouthed gangster Ganesh Gaitonde appears on screen. The actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui's mesmerizing Gaitonde is quite literally a haunting presence: It's no spoiler to reveal that he shoots himself in the head in the show's premiere but appears constantly thereafter in flashbacks. The self-made don serves as both the show's narrator and the force guiding Singh as he struggles to save Mumbai.

Gaitonde may be dead, but his beloved city thrums with life. And through him we learn the details of Mumbai's fictionalized-but-mostly-true inner life: its mighty slumlords; a never-ending supply of crooked cops and corrupt politicians; striving actresses exploited every step of the way up; a powerful right-wing Hindu party; and the connective tissue of crime and lust that links them together. Real-life footage of iconic moments in Indian history, such as the riots between Hindus and Muslims after the 1993 Bombay bombings, is spliced in to make *Sacred Games* feel like a modern history of the metropolis once known as Bombay. (The right-wing Shiv Sena party

renamed the city after the local patron goddess Mumbadevi in 1995.)

As Singh, a Sikh, tries to decode Gaitonde's warning about Mumbai's looming destruction, viewers encounter a seemingly beatific guru, Guruji, who turns out to be masterminding the whole thing.

"Your orgasm is the biggest force inside you," he tells his followers at one point, as he tries to explain how sexual jealousy ended the first era of truth in Hinduism. Guruji evokes any of several spiritual leaders who gained followings in the West while masking sinister plans. But he is hardly the only echo of real India. Viewers will need little imagination to connect the radicalization of a young Hindu boy (the son of a beloved character killed in season 1) to the current growing spate of hate crimes against Muslims in India. And the staged killings of gangsters by Mumbai police—known colloquially as "encounters"—happen all too often in the real world.

The most worrying comparisons, however, are not in how *Sacred Games* depicts India's past and present but in how it envisions the country's near future: an entire security system undermined by bureaucratic graft and ineptitude, where only a great hero can save the place from itself.

Beautifully shot and smartly edited, *Sacred Games*, which launched in June 2018, was Netflix's first original Indian-made series, generating national publicity for the streaming service.

Several more shows have since followed.

Leila was also adapted from a recent novel, this one by the journalist Prayaag Akbar. Once again, Netflix begins the show with a disclaimer that ends with: "There is no intent to portray any religion or religious sentiments or beliefs of any person(s) or community." If the legal-ese seems more targeted, that's because *Leila*'s portrayal of religion in India is especially grim. The show begins in the year 2047, exactly 100 years after India gained its independence. The country is now known as Aryavarta, a sort of militarized Hindu state that segregates members of different religions and castes. Episode 1 opens with a wealthy man playing with his daughter in an indoor swimming pool. He is Muslim; his wife is Hindu; their young daughter is Leila. Suddenly, a government paramilitary group breaks in and beats the father to death. His wife, Shalini (Huma Qureshi), is taken to a center for reeducating upper-caste Hindu women such as herself. There she is reminded that marrying outside her religion is a sin, among other state dictums. The scenes draw from those in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*—which was also recently adapted for television—and are replete with regular beatings and doomed escape attempts.

Leila is a warning of what India could become. It is greatly exaggerated, of course, but its lesson is important. Under India's current prime minister, Narendra Modi, who was reelected with

While Americans got to evolve as the internet slowly grew over the last three decades, Indians are now experiencing a sudden revolution.

a large mandate last May, the government has begun promoting Hinduism in ways that threaten the country's formal secularism, and top leaders have repeatedly threatened the country's Muslim minority. In the show, a maid in a wealthy household is asked if she has ever eaten meat, evoking the way upper-class Hindus frequently threaten Muslims and lower-caste Hindus in India today for eating meat, especially beef.

Meanwhile, water, used with abandon in the swimming pool in the show's opening scene, turns out to be a particularly scarce commodity for the poor Indians shown in *Leila*. This motif also reminds viewers of contemporary problems, such as the city of Chennai's recent water shortages as well as the rapid depletion of the country's aquifers. If anything, *Leila* underplays the coming impact of climate change.

Will Shalini ever find her daughter? Will Singh, the police officer in *Sacred Games*, save Mumbai? For all that the two shows focus on the divides that separate haves and have-nots in contemporary India, the irony is that only Indians rich enough to have HD televisions, high-speed internet, and streaming services will get to find out—at least for now.

THE PROLIFERATION OF THE INTERNET in India, and with it the possibility of streaming television shows, has everything to do with the smartphone. In 2000, a mere 2 percent of Indians were online (compared with 52 percent of Americans). That was because personal computers and telephone landlines were restricted to a similar percentage of the Indian population; for various reasons, both amenities were inaccessible for the vast majority of the country.

While Americans got to evolve as the

internet slowly grew over the last three decades, Indians are now experiencing a sudden revolution: These days, three of them discover the internet every second. Thanks to newly cheap smartphones and cellular data plans, tens of millions of Indians are coming online every year. With an average annual income of about \$1,775 and a median age of 27, most Indians see these smartphones as their first-ever cameras, computers, and television screens.

Netflix, however, has caught on to India's demographic shift a little late. Until very recently, its monthly subscription plans in the country broadly matched its rates in the United States. Yet U.S. streaming services owe their newfound ubiquity not simply to their content but to their cost: In the United States, for example, a \$9 monthly Netflix plan looks very attractive compared with a \$70 monthly bill for cable television. In places like India, however, a \$9 monthly plan for Netflix competes not only with a similarly priced cable television bill but also with far cheaper streaming services such as the Disney-owned Hotstar and Amazon Prime Video.

It was only in July that Netflix launched a cheaper, standard definition, mobile-only plan for about \$2.80 a month. Perhaps tellingly, that move came right after Netflix announced lukewarm growth in users in the United States, leading at the time to a 15 percent drop in its stock price. But as Netflix CEO Reed Hastings has said, his company's "next 100 million" subscribers will come from India, where some 800 million people are still waiting to discover the world of the internet and streaming content. As long as China blocks Netflix, no other single country has as much room to grow.

Competition among streaming services will be intense. While Netflix has an estimated 2 million users in India—it hasn't released exact numbers—competitors like Hotstar, which also broadcasts popular cricket games, reach 300 million users every month on TVs and smartphones (although only a fraction of those users sign up to pay for its ad-free content). And then there's JioTV, launched in 2016 and already the country's second-most popular TV app with hundreds of free live channels.

Streaming services may be bleeding their investors' money, but it's a great time to be a writer, actor, producer, or viewer in the world's largest democracy. Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hotstar, and several others have already commissioned slates of new movies and television series fronted by top local stars. And much of the new content—like *Sacred Games* and *Leila*—will be in the local languages that a vast majority of Indians speak. Bingeing will soon have equivalent words in Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil.

IF ANY SUBJECT WAS MADE FOR TELEVISION, it's Indian weddings—spectacular events on which many Indian parents spend more than they would on an apartment, a car, or a college degree. No other ritual better encapsulates the best and worst of Indian society, from the family gatherings and traditions to the divisions in gender, caste, and religion. The makers of Amazon Prime Video's *Made in Heaven* know this all too well, as they take viewers on a journey into New Delhi's wealthy and upper-middle-class homes—and all their idiosyncrasies and tensions.

The show's two main characters are Tara Khanna (Sobhita Dhulipala) and Karan Mehra (Arjun Mathur), who join forces to form a wedding planning business. Khanna comes from a poor family—the "gutter," as she puts it—but has married an ultrarich industrialist and now lives a life of photogenic comfort. Mehra's parents had more money than

***Made in Heaven* lays bare all of India's many barriers: rich and poor, urban and rural, English-speaking and not, progressive and traditional.**



From left, Kalki Koechlin, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, and Pankaj Tripathi, in a scene from season 2 of Netflix's *Sacred Games*.

Khanna's, but having failed at his first business, a nightclub, he's now facing serious money trouble, with loan sharks at his heels. Mehra also happens to be gay, which in India could be a dangerous thing. (The country only decriminalized gay sex in September 2018.)

Each of the show's nine episodes depict Khanna and Mehra struggling with their own personal and financial troubles as they also scramble to satisfy a new set of clients. Not since the filmmaker Mira Nair's 2001 *Monsoon Wedding* has there been a portrayal of upper-class Indian life that is both this lush and this searing. Viewers meet a couple in their 60s, both widowers, who struggle to convince their children that they should be allowed to love again; a bride who sleeps with a film star before her wedding, only to rediscover her traditional roots and make up with her fiancé; a set of parents who threaten to call off the marriage on their son's wedding day unless his bride-to-be's family pays them a much greater dowry, which they demand in secret. Perhaps the darkest episode involves an Indian man living

in New Jersey whose parents stage a beauty pageant back home to find his ideal wife—whom he then berates for his own impotence. No subject is off-limits in *Made in Heaven*, and the show lays bare all of India's many barriers: rich and poor, urban and rural, English-speaking and not, progressive and traditional.

To what end are these fissures portrayed? The show's main point seems to be that young Indians have grown remarkably deft at navigating the tensions between tradition and modernity—with all the deceptions and hypocrisies that entails—while trying to find happiness and forge their own worlds. Nowhere is this shown more vividly than in Mehra's conflict with his sexuality. While flashbacks reveal that in high school he tried to hide his being gay by acting homophobic, Mehra has since grown up to be out and proud. Little does he know, however, that his trysts with a revolving door of lovers are being secretly recorded by his closeted landlord, whose wife eventually shames him into turning the footage over to the police. Mehra

is arrested and, in the show, ends up becoming the poster child for the gay rights movement that culminated in the real-world Indian Supreme Court ruling that overturned the colonial-era law barring same-sex love.

For all the problems *Made in Heaven* dramatizes, the show's lingering message is one of hope and change. It should come as no surprise, then, that three of its four directors are women: as rare an occurrence in Bollywood as it would be in Hollywood. While shining an unstinting lens on the ugly sides of Indian society, they also depict a people who are tilting the country's arc toward justice and equality.

If that progressive message is going to be heard and seen, however, streaming television shows will need to reach not only upper-middle-class Indian living rooms but also the smartphones that most of its newly connected citizens rely on to get their glimpse of a changing world—and an inspiration for what it could be. ■

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The Women Who Shaped Obama's Foreign Policy

Two new memoirs by Samantha Power and Susan Rice show how idealists became insiders—and what was lost along the way. *By James Traub*



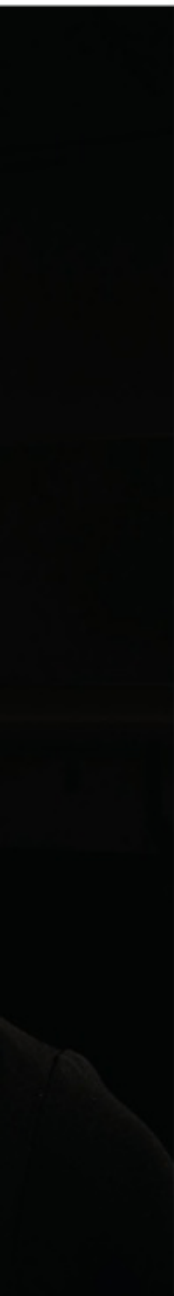
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VERY FEW PEOPLE SHOULD WRITE THEIR MEMOIRS. If you become rich, powerful, or famous, however, people will assure you that you have a story to tell and that you should tell it. And you may. But the very reasons for your success are probably also inversely correlated with the kind of self-understanding needed to make the story worth telling. While readers may really want to know what it's like up there, they're less likely to be interested in the fact that when you were still in the cradle, daddy admonished you not to "take crap off of anyone."

That, by the way, is the "tough love" that Susan Rice, in her book of the same name, writes that her parents applied to her and that she has since imposed on friends, loved ones, and subordinates, some of whom appear not to have been very grateful for the treatment. Still, it must have been an effective formula, for Rice became a U.S. assistant secretary of state at 32 and President Barack Obama's national security advisor at 48. But tough love is not a source of human insight. Having spent her life running as far and as fast she could, Rice writes, "I've had very little time to absorb and reflect on what I have

discovered about myself, my family," or much else. She has, she feels, put off that hard work until now. In *Tough Love: My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For*, Rice recounts, very briskly, her triumphs in the classroom and the playing field, the pain of her parents' divorce, her rapid ascent up the ladder of power, and the inevitable dangers to family life of a career in national security policymaking. Her Obama is a kindred soul who, despite an intransigent world and implacably hostile Republicans, managed to "put points on the board"—her highest accolade.

Washington is full of people like Rice, who are very smart, very ambitious, and very reluctant to distract themselves with self-reflection. Only



rarely is a person with a rich inner life drawn to power. One such person, of course, was Obama, whose own memoir, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, was laced with melancholy. Now Samantha Power, who succeeded Rice as Obama's ambassador to the United Nations, has written a memoir less epic in its reach, though more intimate in its texture, than Obama's. Although Power's title leads the reader to expect a tale of chastening, the author, a former journalist, has actually written a book about how life formed her principles—and about how the experience of government tested them. In *The Education of an Idealist: A Memoir*, Power presents herself as a ponytailed do-gooder with a book bag

who ventures into a very tough-minded world ruled over by a benevolent figure who, alone among them all, grasps both ideals and iron necessity. Her Obama remains admirable even as he falls short of her deepest hopes. (I should note that I was a college friend of Power's husband, Cass Sunstein, and have met her socially on a very few occasions.)

Many readers will rifle through these books looking for fresh gossip on the Obama administration's foreign policy. I promise to come to that—but first something needs to be said about the relationship between personal experience and worldview that is at least implicit in both books. By her own accounting, Rice has scarcely deviated from the path she set out in childhood: By third

grade, she writes, “my intellectual and physical self-confidence was well-established,” and by age 10, she had vowed to become a U.S. senator. That precocious self-confidence came in part from growing up in the bosom of the Washington establishment: Her surrogate aunt was the socialite Peggy Cooper Cafritz, and Madeleine Albright was a family friend. Rice has experienced far less failure than most of us mortals and seems never to have doubted her own gifts. After observing that Obama was “consistently the smartest guy in the room,” she feels compelled to add: “Personally, I hated acknowledging that.”

An African American woman, Rice's most salient identity is as a Washington person. She has spent her entire life thinking about, and formulating, foreign policy; the mental habits of that world, both its aspiration and its limits, are second nature to her. When she describes herself as a “realist” rather than a “woolly-eyed idealist,” she is invoking a standard of professionalism more than an intellectual persuasion. (The phrase abuses not just idealists but the English language, which ascribes to true believers a woolly mind, or head, but not eye.)

Power, by contrast, was an outsider who found her way in. Raised in Ireland, she had the kind of father whom little girls worship: tall, handsome, charming, musical, bardic, and highly attentive. But he drank himself to death and along the way destroyed his marriage. Power never pretends to have squirreled away her painful memories; they haunt her long into her stable and comfortable life in the United States, to which she moved with her mother at age 9. That said, you do not become Samantha Power without deep reserves of self-esteem. She grew up as the smartest girl in class and the starting shooting guard on her high school basketball team. (Rice, though 5 feet, 3 inches tall, was the starting point guard on her high school team.)

Power barely read beyond the sports pages until she got to Yale University in

1988. Foreign policy happened to her, first in the form of Tiananmen Square and then the humanitarian catastrophe in the Balkans. For Power and the generation of journalists who came of age in Sarajevo, foreign affairs was not a strategic pursuit but a moral calling. In the book that made her famous, *"A Problem From Hell": America and the Age of Genocide*, Power examined the rationales that even liberal foreign-policy professionals—people like Rice—deployed to persuade both themselves and others that little or nothing could be done in the face of genocide. Indeed, in *Tough Love*, Rice unapologetically concludes that, given existing constraints, President Bill Clinton's administration—in which she served as National Security Council director for international organizations and peacekeeping at the time of the Rwandan genocide—could have done little or nothing to mitigate the slaughter there. In her book, Rice claims that Power misquoted her in *"A Problem From Hell"* when she wrote that Rice opposed the use of the word "genocide" on the grounds that acknowledging the magnitude of the horror would make inaction far more politically damaging. But the anecdote does not sound wholly out of character.

In 2005, Power found her soulmate in Sen. Barack Obama, who not only read serious books but wrote them. Obama hired her first as a fellow—a kind of conscience without portfolio—and then, when he became president, made her senior director of multilateral affairs and human rights at the National Security Council. Everything seemed strange to Power, as it would for anyone not habituated to life inside the U.S. government. She writes about how marginal she felt and then of her shame at her own self-pity; how repellent she found the boys-club language—"open Kimono," "show some leg"; how dumbfounded she was to learn that hostile senators did not actually expect serious answers to the rhetorical questions they posed. She suffered from a well-

deserved reputation for high-minded idealism and looked for guidance to the famously tough Rice, who had been one of the boys since she was a girl. ("Don't let anybody there roll you," Rice admonished, referring to those parts of the administration resisting Power's efforts. "Act like you are the boss.") And of course, Power continued to follow Rice's path when Obama appointed her as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in 2013.

Power had justified to herself the decision to forsake journalism and academia for government on the grounds that she could do more good there, at least under a president like Obama. Yet she found herself at odds not merely with the rituals of authority but with the hard facts of great-power politics. When Obama traveled to Turkey early in his tenure, Power urged him to press Ankara to acknowledge the 1915 genocide against the Armenians, which she had discussed extensively in *"A Problem From Hell."* But she encountered resistance to offending a close ally up and down the administration and ultimately lost the battle. Obama bluntly told her, "I am worried about the living Armenians. Not the ones we can't bring back." The president wanted to persuade Turkey to normalize relations with Armenia and was willing to trade historical truth for substantive progress. Power had the moxie to tell the president that his bid would fail and turned out to be right. She consoled herself, she writes, with the thought that at least her hero was "more conflicted than he wanted to reveal."

Power is acutely aware that many readers will regard her career as an object lesson in moral compromise. Though she openly admits to her failures, she neither pronounces herself terminally chastened nor accepts a judgment of failure. In March 2011, Power, along with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Rice, and a few others, persuaded a reluctant Obama to join a military intervention to prevent mass atrocities in Libya. Power continues to defend the decision today—as does Rice—and argues that, for all

Libya's current chaos, had Muammar al-Qaddafi been allowed to remain in power the country might have plunged into an even worse civil war. (She does acknowledge that the administration failed to follow up the military campaign with diplomatic pressure to prevent the country from falling apart, as it has.) She believes that timely, if less dramatic, action helped ward off slaughter in the Ivory Coast and the Central African Republic. And she takes pride in the creation of an atrocities prevention board designed to provide early warnings of mass violence and to organize a response, though she offers no evidence that doing so either raised the consciousness or altered the actions of the Obama administration.

Rice's account of her time in office has a wider ambit than Power's, for she played a central role in all foreign-policy decisions in Obama's second term. She is, however, no more a political philosopher than she is a memoirist. Her "mantra," she tells us, is "get shit done." She writes at length of the shit she got done as national security advisor, for some of which the Obama administration probably deserves more credit than it got at the time. Both Rice and Power detail the difficult politics and complex logistics of the administration's response to the West African Ebola crisis in the summer and fall of 2014, which entailed mobilizing the U.S. military to build treatment labs on-site and speed health professionals to the front. Try to imagine the Trump administration organizing something comparable.

Rice does not reflect at length on the deeper critiques of Obama: that he put too much store by words rather than deeds, that he grew too enamored of drones and secret warfare, that he so deeply internalized the supposed lessons of Iraq that he would not use force even when it might have been effective. Her reflections are more small-scale. She openly admits the failure of some of her most cherished hopes, including the virtual collapse of South Sudan after

its birth, a drama in which she played a central role. She also acknowledges that she and others failed to anticipate the rapid expansion of the Islamic State. Nevertheless, Rice concludes, in the face of turbulent events—whether the Arab Spring or Russian aggression in Ukraine—Obama remained true to his principles, which included international engagement, careful deliberation over national interests, and getting shit done. The combination of that consistency and the active national security decision-making process that she installed allowed the administration to both manage crises and put points on the board.

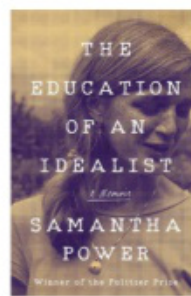
The longest chapter of *Tough Love* delves into Rice's personal crisis over the killing of American diplomats in Benghazi, Libya, in September 2012. She remains deeply angry—and rightly so—at Republican members of Congress and right-wing pundits who tried to pin on her the blame for a tragedy that almost certainly could not have been prevented. You will not be surprised to hear that Rice believes that she emerged from her crucifixion “stronger, tougher, and wiser.” Beyond costing Rice her shot at being secretary of state, the episode demonstrated the single-minded focus of the Republican Party on destroying the credibility of the Democratic president, no matter the cost to his ability to conduct foreign affairs.

The difference between Rice and Power in temperament and worldview arises most fully in their discussion of Syria. In 2011, when peaceful resistance descended into civil war, Rice was often described in the press as an ally of Power in the cause of intervention, for as a civilian she had advocated a military response to the atrocities that the government of Sudan perpetrated in Darfur. But this was a misreading. Like Obama, Rice was always attuned to the limits of the possible; I recall an off-the-record briefing in the late spring or summer of 2011 at which she explained—sincerely, I thought—why military action was far less likely to suc-



***Tough Love:
My Story of the
Things Worth
Fighting For***

SUSAN RICE, SIMON &
SCHUSTER, 544 PP.,
\$30, OCTOBER 2019



***The Education
of an Idealist:
A Memoir***

SAMANTHA POWER,
DEY STREET BOOKS,
592 PP., \$29.99,
SEPTEMBER 2019

ceed in Syria than it had in Libya. “[A]s pained as we felt,” she writes, Obama’s decision to steer clear of the Syrian civil war “was the right choice for the totality of U.S. interests.” As in Rwanda, so in Syria, though for different reasons.

Syria was a more agonizing and more intensely personal issue for Power. She writhed when she heard administration spokesmen offering the kinds of tortured rationales for inaction that she had recounted in “*A Problem From Hell*.” Like most idealists, Power was predisposed to believe that doing right, and being seen to do right, redounded to U.S. national interests. That was the argument she lost over Armenia. As U.N. ambassador—and still as Obama’s conscience—she played an important role in deliberations over the reaction to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s chemical attacks in August 2013. Though Rice had opposed arming the rebels or mounting a no-fly zone, she joined Power, Secretary of State John Kerry, and others in urging Obama to enforce his “red line” over chemical weapons with an airstrike.

Obama ultimately extricated himself from the dilemma when Russia offered to help rid Syria of chemical weapons. Rice concludes that she was wrong and Obama right, since the threat was (she claims) eliminated without the use of force. For Power, the achievement of a U.S. goal was less salient than ending the massacres, which resumed days after the Syrian government agreed to

the deal. She rebukes Obama for the pride he later took in standing up to the interventionists, describing his remarks to the *Atlantic* as a “defensive overstatement.” We could not, she concludes, “call that chapter a proud one in the annals of U.S. foreign policy.”

If each author is the hero of her own story, above each, shaping their destiny from the clouds, is the figure of Obama. They leave the reader with slightly different impressions of this extraordinary figure, at once intimate and remote. He was, Rice says, a realist like her, though one with a devout belief in America’s ability to shape a better world. Power, for all her palpable sense of disappointment at several key moments, rejects that term, pointing to the president’s willingness to act in Libya despite his own reservations. Power’s Obama stands above: She describes him in the midst of the Libya debate as the only figure listening for an answer rather than advancing a view of his own. He is far more attuned to remote consequences of action than the idealists are but far more aware than are the realists of the power of words and even small deeds to shape a different world. He is, above all, an incrementalist who likes to remind the dispirited moral absolutists around him that “better is good.”

Foreign policy is a tragic enterprise, a matter of choosing the lesser among evils. That is perhaps the “education” of Power’s title. Her penultimate chapter is titled “Shrink the Change,” a New Age-y version of “better is good.” She has learned, she writes, that even if she cannot change the world, she can use the power she has been given to do whatever modest good she can. There is no mistaking the pathos of that acceptance. But what else is one to do? “Shrink the change” is the idealist’s realism. ■

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Can American Values Survive in a Chinese World?

A new book looks at the China challenge for the United States—and China itself.
By Tanner Greer

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA bounds from strength to strength. Every year sees increases in its wealth and power relative to the world. But what do its leaders hope to achieve with their new-found clout?

This is the topic of Jonathan D.T. Ward's *China's Vision of Victory*. Ward is ideally placed to write such a book, boasting a doctorate from Oxford University in Chinese politics, a résumé that has led him across the Asian continent, and a political consultancy that he operates from Washington. His answer to the question "What does China want?" is simple: The Chinese want supremacy.

China's Vision of Victory is a useful anecdote to the popular delusion that Chinese leaders seek nothing more than to roll back U.S. hegemony in the Western Pacific—or that they will be sated by becoming the dominant East Asian power. Despite presenting modest and peaceful ambitions to foreigners, the Chinese Communist Party leadership transparently communicates its desire for

primacy to internal audiences. By guiding readers through a barrage of official documents, excerpted liberally throughout the book, Ward shows just how wide-ranging these ambitions are.

To start with, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) already defines its maritime forces as a "two-ocean navy." Chinese energy demands have led the PLA to extend its reach to Pakistan, Africa, and the disputed waters of the South China Sea. White papers spell out Chinese ambitions to be the primary strategic presence not just on the East Asian periphery but in Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Southern Pacific. China's leadership claims that it has core economic interests as far abroad as Europe, Latin America, the Arctic, and outer space. With these economic interests come road maps for securing Chinese relationships or presence in each region.

By 2050, the Chinese aim to have a military "second to none," to become the global center for technology innovation, and to serve as the economic anchor of a truly global trade and infrastructure regime—an economic bloc that would be unprecedented in human history. In their speeches and documents, Chinese leaders call this vision of a China-centered future—a future where a U.S.-led system has been broken apart and discarded—a "community of common destiny for mankind." That ambition debunks the myth of a multipolar future: China seeks dominance, not just a share of the pie.

Ward traces the Chinese desire to shape the future of all mankind (not just the East Asian part of it) to a national myth taught to schoolchildren across China. According to this narrative, China was once the center of the world; China was the mother of invention, the seat of global wealth, and the beacon of civilization. This is China's natural role in the world order—a role disrupted by the "century of humiliation" between the Opium Wars and World War II, when China suffered at the hands of foreign powers. But now that age of suffering is over. China's destiny, according to its leaders, is to reclaim its natural perch as the leading force of human civilization.

This is a familiar narrative to China specialists and one well-suited to a Communist clique that wishes to leverage nationalism to maintain its hold on power. However, Ward repeatedly stresses the popularity of this "national rejuvenation" ideal outside of party circles. "[T]he Chinese public has come to embrace this sense of destiny," he writes.

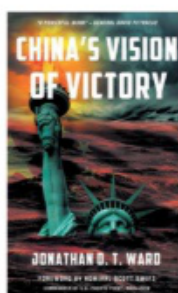




“But this vision is not the Communist Party’s alone. It is the vision at the heart of China’s restoration—a cause to which numerous Chinese citizens and patriots have devoted their lives—and of which the Communist Party is only one expression.”

But problems with the book emerge. Ward’s conviction that the Communist Party is not the driving force behind China’s foreign-policy priorities leads him to sources that weaken his argument. Ward peppers the book with conversations he has had with Shanghai street sellers and Qinghai truck drivers. He supplements these anecdotes with translations from Chinese books and think tank reports that support his broader characterization of the Chinese people.

But China is vast. Look hard enough, and you will eventually find a Chinese person willing to say anything you need him or her to. Ward has no way to prove he has not cherry-picked. A similar problem plagues a section of the book devoted to China’s premodern “tributary system,” in which



China's Vision of Victory

JONATHAN D.T. WARD,
ATLAS PUBLISHING,
316 PP., \$25,
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subordinate states like Korea made regular payments in return for protection, with the questionable assumption that Ming and Qing diplomacy gives us a clear idea of Chinese intentions. Ward relies on a model of the tributary system first developed in the 1940s. This model has been rejected almost entirely by historians who study the issue today. And while Ward is welcome to argue that the current historical consensus is wrong, the critical issue is not what Western historians believe about premodern Chinese statecraft but what the minds in Zhongnanhai, where the Communist Party leadership resides, believe about the country’s past and its relevance to China’s future. On this, Ward has nothing to report.

Here, as elsewhere, the further Ward travels away from the official statements, white papers, laws, and pronouncements of the Communist Party, the more he opens himself up to easy attacks by critics unprepared to face the reality these official documents lay out.

There is, however, a more serious problem in viewing the challenge posed by China's growing power in purely national terms. The implicit question posed throughout Ward's book is whether the United States should acquiesce to China's vision of victory. Can Americans live in a world where the Chinese possess the largest economy, greatest industrial base, most powerful military, and the leading centers of technological and scientific innovation?

Technically, yes. The United States is a nuclear-armed state with no near enemies. It is flanked by two vast oceans and directly controls the approaches to the North American continent. It is endowed with an enormous population with net positive migration. In times of crisis, the United States can rely entirely on internal resources to keep its population fed, clothed, and warm. No other nation has been dealt such an enviable hand. Even a China that militarily or economically dominates Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America would not pose a credible geopolitical threat to the U.S. homeland. For many Americans, quietly ceding victory to the Chinese would be an acceptable cost for averting decades of nuclear brinkmanship.

But this logic has its own problems. It dodges a deciding source of tension in the Sino-American relationship. Communist Party leaders believe they are locked in what Chinese President Xi Jinping has called "fierce competition ... in the ideological sphere" with the West. They assert that this ideological competition threatens the existence of their party and imperils the road to national rejuvenation. They describe historians, researchers, dissidents, and Chinese-language media outlets in countries like Australia, Germany, and the United States as dangers equal to anything U.S. Indo-Pacific Command can throw at them. This is the root motivation behind what are now being called "interference" and "influence" opera-

tions in Western countries.

This is a blind spot in Ward's analysis. The term "United Front" (the party's favored moniker for institutions that co-opt or turn people to serve the party's objectives) does not appear in *China's Vision of Victory*. "Influence operations" shows up just twice, with the gloss that these operations are "meant to distort a country's discourse on China and to constrain action against Beijing." Framing these operations purely in geopolitical terms misstates the challenge they pose. These operations are not just about shaping the opinions of foreign-policy elites but about controlling and coercing enemies of the Communist regime who live outside China's borders. They are part of the same effort that has led to ever tightening censorship; sweeping crackdowns on Chinese law firms, media outlets, and religious organizations; and sent a million-plus Uighurs to detention centers inside China.

So-called influence operations are aimed at the enemies China's leaders fear most: the ones who pose an ideological, not a geopolitical, threat to the Communist Party. These are the hostile forces that threaten the stability of the Communist regime, and many of them—from Christians and Uighurs fleeing religious persecution to Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, and others of Chinese descent who dare imagine different futures for their people—live in America. As long as these groups can safely assemble and freely speak within the United States, America will be seen as a threat to the Chinese party-state. Similar fears have already led Beijing to demand ideological fealty from its

foreign debtors. China's leaders do not ask clients to change their system of government but to squelch criticism of Chinese communism inside their borders. Thus, the leaders of Muslim-majority countries pretend that their faith is not being crushed in Xinjiang, and the Thai government turns a blind eye to Chinese security kidnapping dissidents inside its borders. The Chinese leadership does not compel the same behavior from the United States only because it lacks the power to do so.

Accommodating the geopolitical ambitions of the Chinese people is comparatively easy. Easing the ideological insecurities of the Communist elite would demand far more drastic changes to U.S. politics and society.

Ward asks readers if they are willing to live in a world where China is the supreme economic and military power. It is a fine query, but the hardest question may be whether we are willing to live in a world where dominant economic and military power is wielded by an insecure regime whose leaders believe that the same authoritarian techniques used to control enemies within their society must be used to surveil, coerce, and corrupt those enemies outside it. American values might not survive a world where the possessors of such power view U.S. institutions and civil society as a destabilizing threat. *China's Vision of Victory* asks readers to consider the ambitions of the Chinese elite. To craft sound policy, however, we would be wise to pay just as much attention to their fears. ■

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The British Parliament's Ultimate Weapon

Why does the House of Commons fetishize a golden mace?

By Alex von Tunzelmann

THE SYMBOL OF ROYAL POWER IN BRITAIN'S PARLIAMENT is a weapon and not an especially sophisticated one. The mace, also known as a bludgeon, is a long club with a heavy lump on one end. Maces have been used ceremonially to denote power as far back as the Stone Age. William Shakespeare mentions the mace as part of the burdensome trappings of royalty in *Henry V*: “the balm, the scepter, and the ball / The sword, the mace, the crown imperial.”

Neither the House of Lords nor the House of Commons may sit without a mace present. It is the parliamentary MacGuffin: an object that is in and of itself functionless but without which the legislature cannot function.

Many parliaments and assemblies around the world, including that of the United States, have ceremonial maces, a tradition often traceable back to Westminster. The mace in the House of Commons is made of silver gilt. At 4 feet, 10 inches long and weighing 17.5 pounds, it could probably still do some damage. The stem is curled around with roses and thistles for England and Scotland. The emblems of each of the four nations of the United Kingdom are etched beneath a pearly crown. There is some confusion over this mace's history: It was once believed to have been made for Oliver Cromwell (who rejected King Charles I's mace as a “fool's bauble”) during the Commonwealth period (1649-1660) and later modified with the symbols of a restored monarchy. More recent research indicates that it was probably just made—at considerable expense—for Charles II.

British parliamentarians behaved themselves around the mace for nearly three centuries after Cromwell until 1930, when a Labour member of Parliament, John Beckett, enraged by the suspension of a fellow left-winger, seized it and strode forth. “I decided ... to take the weapon to one of the toilet rooms,” Beckett remembered later, “and place its head in



Above: “Cromwell Turns Out Parliament,” a circa 1850 color plate. Right: A mace on its way to Britain's Parliament in 2005.

one of the magnificent porcelain receptacles which I believed would conveniently accommodate it.” The mace was wrested from him by attendants before he could submit it to what British public schoolboys would call a “bog-washing.”

Since then, several more members of Parliament have seized the mace in anger. In 1976, Conservative MP Michael Heseltine grabbed the mace and appeared to swing it at Labour members who were singing their party's anthem, “The Red Flag.” “Against an unprecedented background of fisticuffs,” the *Guardian* reported, the Labour





government had just defeated by one vote an attempt to prevent it from nationalizing the shipping industry. Scottish Labour MP Ron Brown seized and dropped the mace during a debate on supplementary benefit appeals in 1988. He paid around \$2,700 to fix the damage: “I think I must be paying for the last hundred years of dents, including Heseltine,” he grumbled. Brown later appeared dancing with a mace in a video for the pop group Bananarama.

Labour MP John McDonnell, now shadow chancellor, was suspended from Parliament for five days in 2009 after snatching the mace in protest at his own government’s plans for a third runway at Heathrow Airport. Just last year, Labour MP Lloyd Russell-Moyle seized the mace in protest at then-Prime Minister Theresa May’s refusal to allow a vote on her Brexit deal. “I am aware that for the vast majority of people a gangly man in moleskin trousers holding a 5ft golden rod might look a bit odd,” Russell-Moyle wrote in the *Guardian*. “But I work in a very odd place, which rests heavily on symbol and ritual. ... By ruling without the authority of the parliament, the Tories made the ceremonial mace into a tawdry ornament, devoid of meaning and value.”

For outsiders, the mace may seem like a fetish, but it remains for Parliament a powerful symbol of state and specifically royal authority. As Britain goes through the convulsions of leaving the European Union, both the Brexiters and their opponents may seek to turn that back into a bludgeon. ■

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